The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

NEAL DONNELLY

Interviewed by: David E. Reuther

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Q: Neal, can you give us some of your background? When and where were you born?

DONNELLY: I was born in Buffalo and lived there through my college years. I went to Canisius College; a small Jesuit college in Buffalo. I went there because that was probably all I could afford. I think I got an excellent education there; I double-majored in philosophy and in English literature.

To get through college I worked eight hours a day at the Coca-Cola plant; I'd go to school in the morning and then work there. When I graduated I thought I'd stay at the plant until I was drafted, but two weeks into the high school term a principal from a vocational high school called me up and said, "Somebody gave me your name. Would you come and teach?" I said, "Well, I never thought of being a teacher."

Q: Well, now you graduated from Canisius in 1954?

DONNELLY: Yes, that's right.

Q: Was the draft that pervasive? The Korean War was over?

DONNELLY: The draft was very pervasive and everybody was going. All the smart boys had volunteered for the draft and then were in and out by the time I was drafted, which was '56. In those two years I taught English in a vocational high school and then was drafted. When I was drafted they gave me a battery of tests and thought that I might have some language aptitude and sent me to Monterey for language training.

Q: Give a little more on your background. What did your father do?

DONNELLY: He was a postal clerk.

Q: And your family had been in the upper New York area for generations?

DONNELLY: No, not generations. They were all Irish immigrants; they came over to get a job. My grandfather came over and was a motorman on a streetcar and my grandmother came over and she was a charlady. Maybe not many people remember what a charlady is these days, but a charlady is a woman whose sole job is scrubbing floors.

Q: Yes, I'm sure there's fancier vocabulary.

DONNELLY: No, a charlady is what she was and that's my background.

Q: Now you graduated from high school in '48?

DONNELLY: No, '50.

Q: '50, right, and then graduated from college in '54 and had this teaching job.

DONNELLY: I taught and also was in graduate school at the same time and then I was drafted. I then ended up in Monterey studying Cantonese - Chinese.

Q: How does a boy from Buffalo end up in Cantonese?

DONNELLY: Well, because they thought I had an aptitude and they gave me this wonderful opportunity. I had made up my mind that no matter what, I would never go back to teaching, so I thought, 'Well, I'll get a language,' and they gave me the choice of five languages that were opening up at the time I was getting out of training. So, I picked them in this order; I picked Persian first because I thought 'Get of the army and go into the Middle East and earn a lot of money in oil.' See how smart I am. The second choice was Polish because I come from Buffalo and one-third of the city of Buffalo is Polish. They were more or less logical choices. I had no other logical reason for the other three so I chose them in this order: Chinese-Mandarin, Korean, and Cantonese. And the army being the army, I got Cantonese. So I studied Cantonese for a year and then the army shipped me to Korea where nobody speaks Cantonese.

Q: That's the army's way. So how long were you in Korea?

DONNELLY: A year and a half.

Q: With what unit, performing what functions?

DONNELLY: I was in the Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) and most of the time I was up on the DMZ (De-Militarized Zone) in a little town called Tong du Chon. Tong du Chon is not too far from We Xian Bu and it's where the 7th Division was. Ten of us CIC people had our own compound, so we were in a very small little village called Ha Ba Nee and we were there by ourselves away from the division and lived sort of a Sergeant Bilko type life. We didn't wear any insignias; we were supposed to be civilians, which we weren't, and we had a great deal of freedom that ordinary soldiers didn't.

Q: What was your rank at the time?

DONNELLY: I went over as a corporal and in the military, as I understand it, every four months you're eligible for a promotion if there are enough promotion slots. In Korea because a lot of the boys were doing things that got them in trouble, there were never enough people to fill the slots, so every four months I got a promotion although I wore no rank. So I went over as a corporal and came back as a sergeant first class.

Q: Sounds pretty good on the pay side of things. You would ultimately end up in the Foreign Service. What did you take away from this job?

DONNELLY: The army?

Q: Yes, the counterintelligence.

DONNELLY: There's no question what I took away; I took away a language and I took away a love and a fascination for Asia. I was delighted to get in the Foreign Service and to go back to Asia where I felt very comfortable.

Q: There must be an affinity between Buffalo and Korea; they're equally as cold in the winter, I suppose.

DONNELLY: They are equally as cold, except in Buffalo I didn't have to live in a little hut and sometimes go on maneuvers and live in tents. I've never been so cold as I was in Korea.

Q: The basic function here was investigation of U.S. personnel or?

DONNELLY: I went over as a corporal and in the military, as I understand it, every four months you're eligible for a promotion if there are enough promotion slots. In Korea because a lot of the boys were doing things that got them in trouble, there were never enough people to fill the slots, so every four months I got a promotion although I wore no rank. So I went over as a corporal and came back as a sergeant first class.

DONNELLY: Well, the job of Counterintelligence Corps some of it is very routine like changing locks and checking to make sure security is tight all around. It's almost a police job. The other thing is going around giving security talks to soldiers and then there's the investigative part. If they found anyone who might be a line crosser or a Korean agent, we would interrogate them. The other one is running background checks that they do here in the States if somebody is up for some sort of promotion which requires a classified clearance, then we would run a background investigation on them.

As far as the line crossers, I had a couple of amusing incidents. One, we found a couple of GIs (General Issue) in the Signal Corps up on the line in a Signal Corps van and they were entertaining two ladies, which they shouldn't have been, and some people came from North Korea and robbed them. I was called in to investigate this incident and that happened the night before Easter. So Easter morning I found myself at a local brothel investigating and interviewing two ladies. I wrote this home to my wife, who was amused. The other one was they were missing a lot of classified documents from someplace in 7th Division, they asked me to investigate. I ran down the janitor from that division in his house and found all of the classified documents. He had been stealing them and using them to plug up holes in his wall. He was unable to read English.

Q: Obviously the paper situation has changed. I do some research and was looking at Supreme Command in Tokyo in 1945. What I found in the National Archives was that they would mimeograph a cable, a personal cable or whatnot, and then turn it over and type their memos on the backside. They had so little paper at that time.

You said you were married by this time?

DONNELLY: I married when I was at Monterey. My girlfriend came out. She's a nurse. She came out with a couple other nurses and they went to San Francisco and decided to come down to Monterey and see the sights there. When she got to Monterey we just decided, 'Well, why not?' and we got married there. That was forty-four years ago.

Q: How long did you study Cantonese and what did you think of the program they had there?

DONNELLY: I studied it for a year and of course the program is very good. Cantonese was a bit of a step-sister; the big language of course was Mandarin, as it should be. The program was good. I enjoyed my time there and got a great deal out of it, of course.

Q: Well now, here you are on an unaccompanied tour in Korea. How long were you in Korea then?

DONNELLY: A year and a half.

Q: So you came out of Korea when?

DONNELLY: The summer of '59, I think.

Q: And this was a basic four year enlistment?

DONNELLY: Actually, I was drafted for two years and after being in a half year, they said they'd send me to language school if I upped for three years. So I was in a little less than 3 ï¿½ years. I thought the extra time was worth it and I was right.

Q: So you were brought back from Korea and discharged?

DONNELLY: No, I was assigned to the Pentagon on security detail there; checking for classified documents and all that sort of stuff. It was a very soft job because we worked at night, but we really could do everything in four hours and we did cheat it a little. So it was very soft. During the day I had time, but not much money, so I substitute taught at some of the local high schools.

Q: English literature again?

DONNELLY: No, substitution; you just go in and?

Q: Whatever they need?

DONNELLY: Babysitting is what it is. I got $20 a day and that kept body and soul together.

Q: About this time, what draws you to the Foreign Service?

DONNELLY: I was looking in Washington for a job and a friend of mine applied for Bi-National Centers which most people don't know today, but they were sort of USIS (United States Information Service) sponsored cultural centers in mostly Latin America and there was one in Vietnam. So I went over there to see what that was all about and the guy interviewing me said, "Do you speak any languages?" I said, "Well, Cantonese," and he said, "I beg your pardon?" Now, a lot of people speak Cantonese; there's a lot of Chinese that are American citizens and college graduates, but at that time that wasn't so. He said, "Why don't you just become a Foreign Service Officer," so I went through the process and I did.

Q: But what drew you to the Bi-National Centers?

DONNELLY: My friend said that was a good place to - it was a job. I was looking all over for a job.

Q: What language did you have in college; probably Latin too?

DONNELLY: I had a lot of Latin and I had French and a year of Greek. I was in Liberal Arts curriculum so I had Greek, three years of French and lots and lots of Latin. I had Latin in high school too.

Q: What was the process like then to get into the Foreign Service? This is now, what, 1960?

DONNELLY: It was pretty much the same as it is now; a test and then the orals. I can remember the questions they asked you were quite different. Later on in the Foreign Service, before I retired, I was a deputy examiner and the questions that they ask now are quite different; they're set questions and you sort of expect specific answers. But, I was paneled by, I think, three or four men; one of them was from the public sector and they asked very general questions. I remember two specifically; one fellow asked me what comic I read?

Q: In the newspaper?

DONNELLY: In the newspaper and the other one said, "If you were a lake boat captain and went to take your boat from Lake Superior to Lake Ontario, what bodies of water would you pass through?" Of course, coming from Buffalo, I knew that really well; the Welland Canal and all of that. That was a bit of luck and impressed them.

Q: How were you notified that you had passed? Well, you took the written?

DONNELLY: Yes, and they notified me the day that my first daughter was due to be born. Actually she was ten days late. So I was attending classes in the old Walker-Johnson building which was on, I think, 18th and New York Avenue, which has been torn down now. But that was like a couple blocks from the old 1776, which you remember, the old USIS building. I'd be sitting listening to people like Chuck Vetter and other people talk about the Foreign Service and waiting for the telephone call to come when my daughter was born. She was born on the tenth, ten days later.

Q: So, you've taken the written, you take the oral, they told you right away that you passed the oral?

DONNELLY: No, it was about three months. But I didn't know that I had an assignment until much later. Then I went May 1st, I think is when I went, and was sworn in. I was sworn in by L.K. Little, who has a China connection. He was, for reasons which I don't know, the last customs commissioner in China before the war. The Chinese accepted a foreigner as the customs commissioner; Robert Hart, I think was the first and there were a series of foreigners who were customs commissioners and L.K. Little was the last. I found out later in Taiwan how the Chinese were also proud to be in the customs office because it was squeaky clean and not corrupt like most of the government. The amazing thing was when I got to Taiwan, the Taiwan local administrative officer, the Chinese who did most of our administration, was a man by the naml think his name was Duan, but in any event he was the first Chinese commissioner after L.K. Little and then of course fled from China when the communists took over he joined our office and became the USIS Taiwan administrative chief.

Q: So now you're brought on board at USIS and you go to the A-100 class?

DONNELLY: No, they didn't have A-100 for USIS in those days. It was about a two month class and you just went into Walker-Johnson and people talked to you about one thing or the other. We went to the A-100 just for a couple of sessions, to see a couple of movies about the Foreign Service. I was completely unprepared and when I got to my assignment in Saigon the thing that amazed me was I walked into the room with everybody sitting at a desk. I wasn't prepared for diplomats that just sat at desks all day; everybody had a desk. That amazed me because they really didn't give us a sense of what was demanded of us.

Q: It sounds like a very formal introduction to USIA itself. The test is the same test that all FSOs (Foreign Service Officers) take and yet, you had selected USIA.

DONNELLY: In those days there wasn't any selecting. I'm sorry I forget how that happened, but in any event I was USIA (United States Information Agency) right from the beginning. Right now if you go in the Foreign Service you're going to go through the Board of Examiners and be examined by a bunch of deputy examiners. I was examined only by three or four people, not at State, and specifically for USIA. I don't know when it changed.

My assignment to Saigon was amusing.

Q: How did that come about?

DONNELLY: Midway through this ten week course or whatever it was, I was told to go to see the director of personnel offices to the Far East, whose name I forgeit was an Irish name, and I went up and he sat down and talked to me and said, "How are you?" and all that sort of stuff and then he said, "Come back and see me when you're ready for an assignment." I said, "I was told to come up here and get an assignment." At which point he yelled out through the open door, "Kitty!" Kitty was his secretary who did everything anyway. Kitty came ishe was a great gal with a gravel voice, and he said, "We're supposed to send him someplace," and she said, "Do you speak any languages?" and I said, "Cantonese." "Send him to Saigon," she said. I got sent to Saigon.

Q: How professional. Now, the Biographic Registry has you going to Saigon in May of 1960, so you must've just had a few days in Washington for orientation?

DONNELLY: Does it say May of 1960?

Q: It does.

DONNELLY: I think that's wrong. Our little girl was two months old when we went and she was born May tenth, so it happened in July.

Q: What were your duties in Saigon? Well, how did you get there? This is 196how does one get to Asia in 1960?

DONNELLY: Well, first you go to Buffalo for a couple days and then you get on a plane with your wife, your baby and all these packages and you fly to Chicago. Then you change planes in Chicagall piston planes nono jet yeand then you fly to Portland and from there?

Q: On Northwest?

DONNELLY: On Northwest; you immediately get on a Northwest flight and you fly the polar route to Tokyo, stopping in Alaska and that flight takes a long, long time. You're traveling forever with a little baby, but in those days you traveled first class and that made a difference. In Tokyo we stopped for a couple days and saw a bit of Tokyo, which I had seen beforof course I'd already been there, and then we flew on Cathay Pacific to Hong Kong where we were for two or three days and then to Saigon. So it took a long time.

Q: How was your reception in Saigon? They were waiting for you and had housing?

DONNELLY: They had housing but I don't remember anybody meeting us. We got to the office and they had an apartment for us in a building that was owned by the Bank of Vietnam and we were the only Americans in it. Most of the Americans lived elsewhere in houses and things, but we had this little apartment.

Then I settled down to my job which was junior officer training, and that means you work a little bit in each section. The section I worked in most was the press section where I assisted the press officer in selecting stuff from the wireless file to send to newspapers which they probably ignored, and typing a lot of things and running around. I did just a little bit, a week or so, in the cultural section and just a little bit in the exhibit's section, but most of the time I was in press.

Q: How big is the American Embassy in Saigon at this point?

DONNELLY: Well, we weren't in the embassy; we had our own building. I really didn't get to the embassy except once or twice.

Q: How big was USIS then?

DONNELLY: USIS had about ten offices; if I stopped I could think of all of their names. We had about ten offices and the Vietnamese staff was probably about forty. We had a fairly large building with a good, large library. We had an auditorium, a large exhibit section. It was centrally located. It was a better looking building than the embassy; the embassy was sort of a greenish-gray building, very dull looking. Our building was nice, bright, and white and we were right in the central square near the opera house and the hotels. We had a very good location.

Q: This is going to be your introduction to the various USIA functions. So your first job was in the press section and here you're taking various wireless file things and trying to place them in Vietnamese newspapers?

DONNELLY: Yes, because I spoke Cantonese they had me concentrate on the Chinese city that was adjacent to Saigon, Cholon.

Q: Cholon.

DONNELLY: Cholon, yes. So I knew most of the editors and even the owners of the newspapers there.

Q: So part of the job was to get out and meet the local press people so that that personal contact would assist you in placing...

DONNELLY: Well I had a three-month stint at the branch post in Can Tho. There was a hiatus between the outgoing branch PAO (Public Affairs Officer), Greenwald, and the new one coming in, Dolf Droge. So they put me down as a branch PAO for three months. I know it was over Thanksgiving; it was probably November to January, something like that. There again, nobody told me exactly what a branch PAO should do, so I sort of went by Kentucky windage. The other guy had English teaching courses and gave little talks at schools and then they had a mobile unit which showed movies out in the countryside and it did all of those things.

One thing we would do there is we would record the morning VOA (Voice of America) broadcast and then transcribe it and put it on a mimeograph sheet and send it around as a newspaper because there wasn't really any English news at all in that city and not much news of any kind. So everyday we'd have this newspaper which we would distribute to a couple hundred people, which was nothing but the VOA news.

Q: On the distribution list was?

DONNELLY: Schools and police stations and just the regular sort of people you'd expect. A funny thing happened; Kennedy and Nixon, of course, were challenging each other in the presidential election and someone in Saigon took a black and white photo of Nixon and one of Kennedy and put them on something called the gastetner, which you may remember.

Q: That's the old memory card.

DONNELLY: You could take a photo and make a mimeograph image out of the photo and then you could run it off on the mimeograph machine; it's a reasonable facsimile. He sent enough Nixon photos and enough Kennedy photos so that we could clip the winner onto the newspaper the day after the election.

I'd be down there alone without my wife and I would go back to Saigon a couple days a week. I went back the day before the election and left word with my chief local who unfortunately later was killed by the Viet Cong; a very nice guy named Lou. I left word with him to clip the winner's picture on the news the day after the election. I came back and found out that he had clipped Kennedy's picture on it the day before the election because he knew he was going to win, which negated the whole idea of free and fair elections.

Q: Where was the branch post?

DONNELLY: Can Tho; it's in the Delta. When I was there, there were six U.S. (United States) military officers outside of town and I was in town, the only American, and that's all we had in the Delta in those days. To get therthere was no airfielthe military would fly me down in something called an Otter or a Beaver, a six passenger plane, and they'd land on an abandoned roadway because there was no airport. To alert my chief assistant to come out and get me in a jeep, they would buzz the building. It was actually a lot of fun in those days and it's a lot of fun remembering about it.

Q: So there was three months down in the Delta. So when you came back to Saigon, how much was left on your tour?

DONNELLY: I think I went to Hong Kong after that iit had to be in June, because I remember in May of that year Vice President Lyndon Johnson came out to Saigon. He was a pretty rough guy to deal with. I remember he gave a speech one night at a late dinner and Ed Robinson, the press officer, and I were captioning photos or doing something all day and were leaving about eleven o'clock at night and somebody runs up with a tape from an old Uher tape recorder, open reel tape. He said, "Lyndon Johnson just gave a speech and they want you to transcribe it and give it to the press." So we did. I ran the tape machine and Ed did the typing and we put it on a mimeograph and then we had to get it mimeographed. Of course it took us a while. Sitting out in the front office is Sarah McClendon, who you may remember - she's the old Texan newshen, yelling and screaming at us.

I actually have a copy of that speech, which is unbelievable; Johnson calling Ngo Dinh Diem one of the greatest men. He was greater than Roosevelt because Roosevelt couldn't get 89% of the vote. All sorts of stuff, but I can give you a copy of it if you want.

Q: I think ADST would be interested. Speaking of Diem, there was an anti-Diem coup at the time that you were in Saigon.

DONNELLY: But he didn't fall; the coup was two days after Kennedy's election. I was home; I was in Saigon at that time and I woke up at about three o'clock in the morning and there was a lot of firing right outside our apartment, so I said to Joan, "If they're still there in the morning, it's a coup and if they're gone in the morning, it's the Viet Minh causing trouble." We called them Viet Minh in those days. They were still there in the morning and so we were sort of pinned in our apartment for three days. It was hit with grenade and rifle fire, but no real damage. We were the only Americans there. The embassy didn't contact us for two days. Finally, they... We didn't have a telephone; there was no telephone in our apartment. These are the sort of things that could not possibly happen today.

Q: It sounds like your children are beginning to have good Foreign Service stories. I mean, if she was in the apartment at the time.

So here on your training assignment you saw your first American election from the overseas side of it. What was the atmosphere in Saigon in the 1960s? This was the end of the Eisenhower years.

DONNELLY: Well, the Vietnamese are rolling with the punches, the ordinary peasant, they'd been through a lot; they'd been through the French. But the elite, the educated, or "intelligencia," as they liked to call themselves, were very pro-French. The French had nothing to do anymore in Saigon, but they were pro-French as a way to show that they were anti-American, I think, but everybody had to depend upon the Americans. Now this was long before we had a lot of troops in there. We had, I think, six hundred American advisers throughout the country at that time and they were just advising how to put the bullet in the gun, that sort of thing, and maybe a little bit of technical information, I don't know.

There were a couple people in USIS who were advising on psywar things. We had a motion picture outfit that made a weekly newsreel for the government; it would be shown in the movies. It was a propaganda thing. Ngo Dinh Diem, when he took over, like Marcos when he took over, was universally accepted, but things began to happen. He was very open, I'm told, when he first came in. He would see anybody; very, very free. As time went on, he became suspicious and would see fewer and fewer people, and at the end, I'm tolhe was speaking only to his brother and his sister-in-law, he mistrusted everybody. That was part of his problem.

Q: Can you talk a minute about the traveling USIA film program? Is that worldwide or was that just something in Southeast Asia?

DONNELLY: It was worldwide and it was being phased out when I came in. There weren't movie houses and of course there's no television anyplace and peasants in the rural areas would very seldom see a movie. USIS would have these jeep-like trucks, I guess they're called Jeepsters, and have a generator in there and a sixteen millimeter projector and a screen. They would send out to villages and set up maybe in the village square with the assistance of the mayor or police chief or someone and show movies. The movies were probably inappropriate; they had movies of the Hudson Dayliner going up and down the river, the Tower of Learning in Pittsburgh, sometimes health movies about hygiene and whatnot, but people came to see them because they were images moving on a screen. Now of course in a sophisticated world it's hard to imagine that this had any use at all, but we did it.

I went with a couple and actually we went right into what you might call a jungle, just a clearing, and a hundred people would show up and sit down and watch a movie about the Pittsburgh Tower of Learning.

Q: You were telling me earlier about working with the Chinese newspaper people in Cholon. What was their relationship to the whole political scheme?

DONNELLY: They were very pro-American because they were anti-communist. They were very much anti-communist, but they weren't all that pro-Diem except they were closer to Diem than the ordinary Vietnamese were. He was fairly good to them, I think. The Chinese like to be left alone and he left them alone pretty much. But the city of Cholon was Chinese; everybody spoke Chinese. They contributed to his campaigns. In the election that I was there for, President Ngo Dinh Diem, as Lyndon Johnson said, got 89% of the vote. He really lost in the countryside or he got maybe 50-50; I forgot what, but he got the Chinese vote overwhelmingly which is what brought his numbers up. The Chinese are status quo people; they don't like change. They know what they've got; they don't know what they're getting. So, they supported him.

Q: They of course wouldn't have the nationalistic view that the Vietnamese would have.

DONNELLY: No, not at all, and they were anti-communist and Diem was an anti-communist.

Q: Speaking of things changed, your next assignment in 1961 is to go off to Hong Kong.

DONNELLY: Hong Kong, yes.

Q: Now this is a new administration; Kennedy and Johnson have come in. In fact, Johnson has just been through Saigon. In the USIA world, did that create a different view of what one's job was or the atmospherics under which you worked?

DONNELLY: Not at all. Not at my level anyway; not that I could see. Throughout my career, I think most Foreign Service people, when it comes to a job, they're not political. I think in Washington they are. I found that when I worked in Washington; that people are democrats or republicans, but for the most part in the Foreign Service, you're just a Foreign Service Officer. I never felt any ambassador or any PAO or anybody be overly political.

Q: Can you describe your duties in Hong Kong? Who were you working for and how big of a section was it?

DONNELLY: Hong Kong, again, had about ten offices and I was assigned to the press section; I was there five years and always in the press section. I sometimes had collateral duties; distribution officer at one time and motion picture officer, but that was in addition to being press officer. I was the assistant press officer and later the press officer.

My duties were, one, to supply local papers with any information from the wireless file from Washington that seemed appropriate; that would be things like text of presidential speeches or press conferences or important speeches. We had a distribution net and we'd get those out pretty quickly. Another duty was to arrange any press conferences that need be. Almost every week we'd have at least one; one person from Washington would come out that would want to give a press conference. I would alert all the newsmen, both foreign and local. I remember one time within a period of two weeks, Averell Herman gave four press conferences on his way to and back from Laos. Admiral Taylor, Bobby Kennedy, Teddy Kennedy, and even some Hollywood types like Louie Armstrong; just lots and lots of people that I can't think of at the moment, but almost every week there would be a press conference. As a press officer, if you want to be successful you have to do one thing; you have to learn to drink with the foreign press. There's an awful lot of that. And you know, if you (they don't tell you this, but you learn it quickly enough) are honest and friendly with the foreign press, they give you a break. I never had any foreign newsman try to do me in, in any way.

Q: Was there a press club in Hong Kong at that time?

DONNELLY: Yes, the press club in Hong Kong was one of the first in Asia. It was started in China and then moved to Hong Kong.

It was in an old mansion; a beautiful mansion on Robinson Road. It was in such a great spot that it was eventually sold; they didn't own the building. It was sold and a big building was put up there, so they had to vacate it. I was there for the wake and at the wake, which was around the bar, all the news members were therRoy Essoyan, Bob Elegant, and all these guys. They showed the movie Love is a Many Splendid Thing because that was filmed partially at that building.

Then they moved from there to a very undesirable spot along the waterfront at Li Po Chun Chambers. That didn't work and the Club lost membership. Then they moved to the new Hilton Hotel in a fourth floor conference room, function room, I guess they called it. It was very small. It had about four tables and a small bar. That didn't do too well. They bit the bullet and then took the top floor of the Hilton Hotel, the twenty-fifth floor, and that was fairly successful. From there they moved to the Mercury House when they had to leave the Hilton, and finally, the governor of Hong Kong gave them the old ice house on Ice House Street and that's where they are now. They built a very, very nice club.

Q: Can you kind of explain what the ownership and what the use of the press club was?

DONNELLY: The membership was half and half probably; I'm not sure of the percentages, but there were full members who were newsmen and then associate members who were businessmen and diplomats and things like that. I don't know what the dues were; I don't think they were very much. They made the money on the drinks. After work you'd go there and the world would come to you; everybody stopped by there. I was always late coming home because I'd stop by there.

Actually, they would elect officers each year and I was actually an officer one year. When they moved to the fourth floor in the Hilton, the membership dropped significantly and they decided eventually to put some money into trying to get a better place. In that year, I was elected without any campaigning or any idea at all of being an officer. I was elected to be either the secretary or the treasurer and I was so effective in it that I can't remember which one I was. I didn't do much.

Q: By way of dating this, the Hilton was built in Hong Kong in 1963.

DONNELLY: I attended the topping off ceremony there. They built it in 1963, I would have said '62, but maybe it's '63, but now it's torn down already. They already tore it down and put up something else; things don't last in Hong Kong.

Q: I know that because there is an interesting story about Marshall Greene, who was the consul general at that time. He had to go through the building before it was open to ensure that there was no material from communist China in this American building because of the embargo.

DONNELLY: Ah, the Certificate of Origin, CCO. Anytime you bought anything, you had to have a certificate saying it did not come from China. Joan and I gave up an opportunity to buy the most beautiful Chinese bowls because we couldn't get a CCO for them and we're kicking ourselves to this day because we didn't. We had somebody, I think from the Treasury Department, and he had an office in the consulate general and his job was to make sure everybody had a CCO, Certificate of Origin.

Q: So you're associating with the press in Hong Kong. I would assume that Hong Kong has for some time during the 1950s been one of the press centers; there's big press probably in Tokyo, big press in Hong Kong and then they split out from those two places to cover Asia.

DONNELLY: There were forty-four foreign newsmen in Hong Kong when I was there. It was the nerve center of China watching. One reason was at the consulate it was an FBIS (Foreign Broadcasting Information Service) operation, which I think is CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), of the whole broadcast service. They would buy papers from China, the provinces, and translate them and put out every day translations of Chinese newspapers. This was key to understanding China because the Chinese communists did not allow newspapers to be distributed outside the country. So, the CIA would surreptitiously buy these papers and then have them translated and every day put out translations. This was the key ingredient for newsmen; the newspaper reports. So if you were a China watcher, you wanted to be there.

Q: Now, as you're there over the years Vietnam is beginning to heat up to the south. Is this beginning to draw newspaper people or do they all decamp and go to Vietnam?

DONNELLY: They would take side trips, but they wouldn't decamp, no. They would just go, like the UPI (United Press International) guy, Charlie Smith, he would go there from time to time, but his base was Hong Kong. Vietnam had enough newsmen of their own. I think the news crew at one time was 300. When I was there, there were three American newsmen in Vietnam; three. I forget their names now. That's why there wasn't much in newspapers in America about the problems in Vietnam because unless you had an American newsman, nothing's happening.

Q: There's no sound when the tree falls in the forest there?

DONNELLY: No, nothing happens unless there's an American newsman; it's different now with CNN (Cable News Network) and international reporting. But in those days you needed an American newsman to report it. For example, in Hong Kong 1962, on September 1st there was a tremendous typhoon; Typhoon Wanda. It was the worst typhoon they had for twenty or thirty years; there was a tidal wave and 130 people died, a lot of large ocean-going transport ships were beached, cars were overturned. It was just a terrible typhoon, and as I said 130 people died. It was front page news, of course, in the Times and the Post and all over. There was lots and lots of common interest stories devoted to it. The very same day there was a flood in what was East Pakistan, (Bangladesh), and 5000 people died and that got about a half an inch because there was no American to report it, so it didn't happen. It's different now.

Q: In the press section as you're feeding the local press and trying to make sure they carry American-type of stories so they're familiar with the United States, what kinds of press are in Hong Kong for you to work with it?

DONNELLY: There are three English papers; the South China Morning Post, pro-government, pro-British; the Hong Kong Tiger Standard run by a Chinese the lady whose father invented Tiger Balm that a lot of people are familiar with, and then there was a small circulation evening paper, the China Mail. But the big ones were the South China Morning Post and the Tiger Standard. Then there were between thirty and forty Chinese papers. A couple of them were pro-Kuomintang. Then there were some pro-Communist papers. And then there were a bunch of others that were just kind of out to make money. I wouldn't have any contact with the Communist papers, but I knew all the top reporters on the major Chinese papers and on the English papers. We'd get together quite often.

Q: I think that's my next question. How would you liaise with them?

DONNELLY: Well, they'd call me up usually. If anything happened, they'd call me and say, "Is so-and-so coming to town," "Where is so-and-so," or "Can we get to talk to?," and, "I understand that something happened. Do you have any information on something in Washington?" I might have something more on this file I could send them. I kept the book of every press inquiry I got and I'd write down what the inquiry was in a big book. I probably would get all of thirty or forty inquiries a day because there were so many papers and I guess they felt comfortable calling.

Q: So actually the USIA operation in Hong Kong is fairly substantial even though we're only talking about Hong Kong.

DONNELLY: It was substantial. There were always a lot of navy boats in town and there would be a lot of requests to go on the navy boats and talk to one of the officers or the navy would always want to arrange a concert; they would have a band that they would like for play for the school kids or something and I'd help arrange that. As I said, the newsmen would like to go on the boats; I don't know what they'd do on there. If there was any incident with a Marine or a sailor, I'd have to answer the press on whatever they asked.

After this terrible typhoon, Wanda, there were these boats all over the place; big liberty ships on dry land all over the island. A reporter called me up and said, "The navy ships are in port. Could you get us a helicopter ride to go photographing it?" By God, I called up the navy and they said, "Yes." So we went up, I think I took about ten reporters up, we flew all over the island and the New Territories and they snapped a lot of pictures of these boats.

Q: Were there other venues for socializing with the local press?

DONNELLY: All sorts of dinners and of course the local press would come in to the correspondent's club as well.

Q: They would see you, too, as access to Marshall Greene and whatever the problem was?

DONNELLY: For example, there was an American citizen who wandered into China and was held there awhile. The press asked me to arrange seeing her when she got out. That was one of the problems I had there with this lady. We found out that she was deranged and the consular officer wanted to shield her from the press and the press wanted to talk to her because she's an American that had been into China when Americans couldn't go into China. That was a problem.

Some of the Korean turncoats would come out one by one and I and the political officer would go to the border at Loh Wu and meet them and bring them back. The press would want to talk to them and I'd find out whether these guys wanted to talk to the press and I'd make them available. There were about four that came out when I was there; the last one was a guy by the name of White, I think, if I recall correctly. And then people like Downey; Downey was one of the CIA agents who had been in China a long time. His mother was allowed to go see him and they wanted to talk to her so I asked her if she wanted to talk to them and that sort of stuff. So there was always a lot going on with the press. With forty foreign newsmen and about thirty or forty newspapers, there was just lots and lots of contact.

Q: I presume you're turning that around and alerting the political section or the consul general, "Hey, this is the buzz on the street; this is something."

DONNELLY: When there was any buzz, but there weren't many secrets in Hong Kong. There was no real agitation in Hong Kong until about '65 when they started to have the riots, and there wasn't much to report on the streets or anything.

Q: I'm under the impression that there was a fairly steady refugee influx in the '62 period.

DONNELLY: In May of 1962 there was something we called the Exodus. China had, I think it might have been because of the backyard furnaces debacle or something, but they had a real famine situation in south China and people wanted to flee to Hong Kong to eat, really. The Chinese, for reasons which nobody understood, let their guard down. They usually stopped people at the border, but those guys just decided to let their guard down and in a month, I think the figures are 120,000 people crossed into Hong Kong and they threw back 60,000. It was a tremendous influx and then all of a sudden just as strangely as they had dropped their guns, the guards picked them up again and stopped the Exodus. But that left, I think, about 60,000 people. They were called illegal immigrants and they were, over the course of months and years, legalized. Hong Kong has always had a refugee population; people living in shacks on the hills. They've done a good job of the settlement of all sorts of substantial structures.

There were, during the wind up of the Vietnam War, the boat people. I was gone then.

Q: That was later. But you were there for the start of the great Cultural Revolution and that sort of stuff. If you were a China watcher you went to Hong Kong to watch that.

DONNELLY: Yes, and that was the preoccupation, obviously, of our political section.

Q: Did you bump into many American academics that were using China as a watching?

DONNELLY: Yes, there were some, but those types would go see the political officer; they wouldn't see me. I was too involved with the press. We did have a couple that would come in our office and use our facilities and ask a question or two, but they really wanted to see the political officer.

Q: Having worked there, I think you were there '61 to '66, did you have your favorites among the local and the foreign press who seemed to be well plugged in?

DONNELLY: Any press officer realizes you have to know who you can trust. Yes, there are people I trusted and people I didn't trust. I guess the answer to your question is yes.

Q: You started out as the assistant press section officer and then you were the head of the whole press section?

DONNELLY: Well, the press section was under the information officer, but we operated pretty much independently.

Q: Who was head of USIA at that time?

DONNELLY: Bob Clark had just left and Jerry Stryker was acting. Then Earl Wilson came in and he was there for a couple years, and then Ken Boyle.

Q: Actually, how is it that you were there for almost five years? That's a long tour.

DONNELLY: My whole career has been happenstance; I didn't plan anything. I don't know; it just happened. I was in Taiwan for eleven years and people don't understand that, but it just sort of happened.

Q: Well, certainly personnel is sending you messages, "Shouldn't you move on?" or where your boss says, "Hey, I want Neal here."

DONNELLY: I was actually ordered out of Kaohsiung to Taipei during my second Kaohsiung tour. I was ordered by Bob Nichols. Of course we can get into this when we get to Taiwan, but after I had my first tour in Kaohsiung, I wanted to go back. USIS didn't want to send me, but the ambassador wanted me to go back, so I did; you do what the ambassador wants. Then I had a tour in Washington and the PAO asked me to come back to Taipei as cultural officer and so I did. While I was there in the second tour we had the normalization; they kept me on. It's all happenstance.

Q: Right, but getting back to Hong Kong, most tours are two year tours and most people that we interview say, "Ah, the third year you know everything and it's no fun anymore." Well here you are five years in Hong Kong doing exactly the same job. Did you feel a little burnout or?

DONNELLY: Anybody that can't have fun in Hong Kong shouldn't be a Foreign Service Officer. When I went in, the tours were two years, but Kennedy appointed Edward R. Murrow as the head of USIA and he decided to save money he would make the tour three years. So, I went over expecting a two year tour and was told I was there three years and then I went on home leave and then went I went back, Edward R. Murrow had gone and the new head of USIA switched it back to two years. So that's why I was there five years.

Q: So actually that just represents two tours.

DONNELLY: Two tours, yes.

Q: After Hong Kong then, you get a work break.

DONNELLY: Yes, they sent me to Harvard.

Q: There you go. It's a very, very good way from Buffalo.

DONNELLY: They sent me to Harvard and that was interesting.

Q: Well, here you're in Harvard, it's the middle of the Vietnam War period, there are demonstrations, and you're a language officer. Did you fit within that environment?

DONNELLY: Ah, crammed into it, but not "fit," no. I got to Harvard and when I went to sign up for courses and whatnot, I was met by all sorts of-

Q: What was the program that brought you to Harvard?

DONNELLY: The Foreign Service will send a number of people every year for a year of academic training and that's all it was. You pretty much could choose; I chose Mandarin language training. Half of my time was Mandarin language, the other half was Asian history, mainly Chinese history courses.

There was heavy anti-Vietnam sentiment; students shouting and screaming. I was amused towards the end, in May I guess it was. Harvard has a reading period where no classes are held and the students read for their exams at their own pace. John Fairbank suggested that the students rather take the reading period to work against the war in Vietnam. What they did is they had a very short statement that they coerced all professors to sign and the statement started out like this, it was an anti-war statement, "We, the experts on Asian history," and I thought "We, the experts", these are graduate students who hadn't been any place but a classroom. I found the arrogance of the students just unbearable.

I learned a lot there. It was a very good experience.

Q: Well, obviously you would've had classes with Fairbank.

DONNELLY: Yes, he taught a couple classes and he would invite students to his house for tea and that sort of thing and he invited me specifically. We never got to be buddy-buddy or great friends and I never called on him very often, but did have a couple of conversations. He invited me specifically because he knew that I was USIA and he was a USIS officer at Shanghai.

Q: I'd forgotten that.

DONNELLY: So he was interested in how they're doing things now, but he and his wife, Wilma, both had been in China and he had been USIS. At the end of the war, I guess, a lot of academics had done that for a while.

Q: In fact, I think she ran a cultural exchange program at that time.

DONNELLY: I think she probably did.

Q: That raises an interesting issue. How did you see the paradigm of China at this time in the academic setting? I have a Life magazine article that shows Luce was telling everybody the reason to fight in Vietnam was to hold back the Chinese hordes. China was the explanation for Vietnam.

DONNELLY: It was interesting because of course the sympathy was anti-war among the vocal students and with the Vietnamese. The Chinese, of course, were backers of the Vietnamese. The professors, all had spent their lives studying Chinese language and Chinese history, but yet were denied the ability to go there, so they were very upset, of course. That was their life's work, but it was blocked to them. It was blocked to them mainly because of U.S. government policy, so they weren't all that happy. But during that time, China wasn't helping itself with PR (public relations); there was the great Cultural Revolution, students running wild, China pulling back ambassadors. I think at that time there was at one point when China had only three countries where they had ambassadorships; one was Albania, I forget the other two, maybe North Vietnam. It was very difficult to be pro-Chinese, but certainly students were very sympathetic with the Chinese aspect, not necessarily with Mao Zedong.

I was at Harvard for a year. John Fairbank devoted one-half of one class to Taiwan and grudgingly said, "Well, they look like they're doing okay, I guess." You know, that sort of thing. To most people, Taiwan was a bunch of Chiang Kai-shek thugs and awful people, and we were supporting this terrible regime. I looked at Taiwan at that time, having spent a lot of time in Asia and having visited Taiwan, as one-half of the China problem. In a sense, it still is. It's a half of our China problem. But it was completely ignored.

Q: Who else was at Harvard that you would've taken classes from?

DONNELLY: Benjamin Schwartz and Ezra Vogel who took over for Fairbank; he wrote my efficiency report actually.

Q: Oh, your agent had to have an efficiency report written off this?

DONNELLY: The efficiency report says, "Yes, I guess for a Foreign Service Officer, this is the best you can expect." (laughs)

Q: How did this opportunity come to you? Again, the spinning of the wheel, or you sought it out?

DONNELLY: Happenstance, I don't know. I was just offered the opportunity and I took it.

Q: That's great. What did you think you got out of it?

DONNELLY: Language, and certainly an appreciation for and an interest in Asian history. I understood a lot of things and it was a good academic year.

Q: After Harvard you're actually just beginning on being in a school environment; you went from there to Taichung Language School.

DONNELLY: Taichung Language School. I was there for not quite a year; I was pulled out early because they needed someone to staff the branch in Kaohsiung. It's a big port city. There was military north of the city and the naval base at Tsoying. There were some U.S. Naval people and a few other military in Kaohsiung, but I was the only Foreign Service officer southern Taiwan. It's a big city with a lot of important people. It was quite interesting.

Q: Let's go back to Taichung for a minute. How was the language school set up and what was it doing in the middle of the island?

DONNELLY: It's now in Taipei, as you know. Why was it in the middle of the island? I think it was somebody's idea that it's best to teach language in a local setting where you can go out and hear Chinese spoken all the time. There are too many distractions in Taipei and there's too much English spoken there. I guess that was the idea. I think it worked; I think there were an awful lot of people in Taichung, a few that spoke English, but a lot of people spoke Mandarin. Of course the language of the local people in Taichung is what they call Taiwanese or Fujianese, or whatever they want to call it, but it was very similar.

Q: Your Mandarin didn't get you far down.

DONNELLY: Most people could understand it and certainly the young people were all educated in Mandarin.

Q: Now who was in language school with you? Do you remember? Was it a big class?

DONNELLY: Yes, Al Romberg, who later became a State Department spokesman, he lived next door to me. Dick Williams, who was later consul general in Hong Kong.

Q: Was Bill Rolp there at that time?

DONNELLY: No, Bill Rolp was not there. I guess other people's names will come to me in a minute, but those two names stand out.

Q: But it was a fair number of people, ten to fifteen people?

DONNELLY: It was about thirty, I think.

Q: What were they going to do with them?

DONNELLY: Some of them were military and there were some, I guess, CIA. I didn't know; I've always been rather dense about the CIA. One of my friends there, I found out later, was in the CIA. I'd had no idea. But there were a fair number of them. Only a few were State Department that I know of; Naran Ivanchukov, and of course Romberg. Naran and Romberg and Dick Williams. In USIA there were Wally Gibson and myself, Dave Huey and there was a guy named Bill Buehler who was in the Army with me in Korea; he was CIA and later left the CIA and now is teaching Chinese at the language school in Monterey. He was at the army language school in Monterey when I was there and then he went to Korea with me. He studied Mandarin right from the get-go; his Mandarin is very good, obviously.

Q: Now FSI (Foreign Service Institute) Taichung is so many hours of speaking and so many hours of recitation off tapes?

DONNELLY: Six hours of class work and then you work at home; it's intensive.

Q: Did you get an opportunity to tour the island as part of the class?

DONNELLY: Yes, for one week, I think between Christmas and New Year's, they assign a teacher to two or three students to tour the island. We went around it in a car that belonged to one of the students. What we found is that the teacher who was of course a mainlander, not a Taiwanese, was absolutely useless. He didn't know anything about the island and he couldn't speak the local language, so we could've just as well went without him. (laughs)

Later on I toured the island myself with one or two friends on bicycles; I've been all over that island on bicycle. Staying in little inns at 75 cents a night or something like that.

Q: Now this is before the economy in Taiwan really begins to pick up, isn't it?

DONNELLY: Yes.

Q: The U.S. terminated aid in '65, I think, and you were there in '67. Were there any inklings of what would become this great economic expansion?

DONNELLY: When I was in Kaohsiung, they opened up something called the Kaohsiung Export Processing Zone. It was several factories built on what was a sandbar in the Kaohsiung Harbor and they invited foreigners, mainly Americans, British and whatnot, to bring in material or components and hire local people, usually young girls, to process them and then send them out, but not sell them in Taiwan. They started out, the young girls, making transistors and shirts, tennis rackets, golf clubs, all these things, and they would earn probably about $30 a month. I think that was about the beginning. That was extremely successful; foreign companies made a lot of money and the government made some money on taxes. It didn't hurt the local economy bringing in imported goods because they couldn't be sold there and people were getting money and would buy motorcycles and things.

It worked so well that they set up one north of Kaohsiung and then another north of Taichung. In any event, there were three of them by the time I left. The idea was so good that they just kept expanding in it and forgetting about the export processing; just bringing in. I don't know if they did it in any other country, but it was certainly the beginning of American factories taking advantage of local labor.

Q: You're in language school and you left early, you said, to go to Kaohsiung. You said there were a couple of other USIA people there; did they have other assignments and you were there unassigned, or you were always going to go to Kaohsiung and you went early?

DONNELLY: Happenstance.

Q: (laughs) You did that already!

DONNELLY: I had no inkling. I didn't ask for it. I don't know why it happened.

Q: Well now, in those days could you take language without an ongoing assignment?

DONNELLY: In those days, yes. Right now if you're in the Foreign Service, you bid for assignments. Never; I never bid for an assignment. That procedure was not in effect when I was in Taiwan.

Q: That would come in, in the 1970s. You're right.

DONNELLY: They would decide where they want to send you. I think in the case of sending me to Kaohsiung, the PAO in Taipei was Ken Boyle and he had been my PAO in Hong Kong, so he knew me. He didn't ask me if I wanted to go, he just said, "Go." He said, "Go," and he goeth; come and he cometh. (laughs)

Q: So you left the language school a little bit early. If you took language at Harvard and you've got FSI, you must've hit 3/3. Did you test out?

DONNELLY: Oh, I think so. I took some Taiwanese as well in Taichung, so I had some Taiwanese.

Q: Now you go to Kaohsiung in July of '68. Would you describe what that mission was; it was a consulate?

DONNELLY: No, it was just a branch post.

Q: But was there also a Foreign Service consulate there?

DONNELLY: No.

Q: So USIA was it?

DONNELLY: I was it. If they wanted a speaker at a college assembly, if they wanted an American official, I was it. If anybody had to call in the mayor, I was with them to call the mayor. I'd have the mayor over to my house and?

Q: I'm interested in this because of course when I was there in the '80s, Kaohsiung was a three or four person post reporting on political events that were going on in Kaohsiung. So here the American presence in Kaohsiung is the telling of America's story; USIA-type presence. Kaohsiung is not politically and economically important enough?

DONNELLY: Taiwan probably wasn't in the American scope. The TOEFL Exam would be run in my center, some of it. All that sort of stuff.

Q: How many locals did you have then?

DONNELLY: I had about eight, I guess. I had a driver, three librarians, an assistant, a janitor, and a motion picture guy.

Q: So you had an auditorium where you could show films or hold cultural events?

DONNELLY: If we had speakers come down, just ordinary...

Q: What kind of academic institutions were there at the time?

DONNELLY: There was a medical college; the medical college was the biggest college. There was another college; I forget the name of it. It was a normal college. Later on they put a couple more universities down there. A medical college and a normal college, I think were it. I remember, they asked me to give a lecture on American foreign policy at the medical college. Most of the students at the medical college were Taiwanese and after I gave the talk, they had something called "pan chang;" that was the student who was to run roughshod over other students if they got politically away from the Kuomintang; learned too much.

Q: This was the political officer.

DONNELLY: They had a political officer, yes. So he got up - of course, most of the students are Taiwanese - and he said, "Why don't you," meaning America, "want us to return to the mainland?" And I said, "I want you to go to the mainland," at which point the students erupted and they whistled and cheered. (laughs)

Q: (laughs) That's an interesting way in which the society was organized at that time. The KMT, the Kuomintang, is a Leninist party.

DONNELLY: They controlled all the police chiefs, all the university presidents and major staff, all the ministries; they had everything. The Kuomintang really had things screwed down pretty tightly. So much so that almost all the Taiwanese disliked the regime, but they would be afraid to even talk about it because they're not sure... If there are three people together, then someone is an informer. Besides the garrison command and the police and their equivalent of the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), they had several units whose job was to ferret out dangerous types, so Taiwanese wouldn't want to talk openly. If they even mentioned the number 2-2-8, they would be thrown in jail. I know a man who was thrown in jail for having a copy of Edgar Snow's Red Star Over China; he took it from an American school library. They found it and then they threw him in jail.

The husband of one of my employees was ratted on because when he was in China he belonged to a hiking group and they had Communist connections, although he was no Communist. Years later, somebody had an argument and ratted on him that he was a Communist and they threw him in jail and then one day they just called up and said, "Come and collect the body." They executed him.

It was very tight. You had to be very careful what you said. Some people were fearless though; there was a politician named Kuo Kuo-ch'I. They called him Ta P'ao, meaning "big cannon" because he had a big mouth. I went to one of his election rallies and he was talking. The way they ran election rallies, all candidates could get up and talk for twenty minutes or a number of minutes and that's all they had.

This rally was for a legislative Yuan (equivalent of our Congress). There could be KMT candidates and independent candidates, but the independents could not form a political party; they had to run separately. Big Kuo got up and said, "I don't want to talk about Taiwan. I want to talk about a small country in Africa called Rhodesia. In Rhodesia all the important positions, all the police and magistrates and the important government people, they're all from another country. They're all from Britain; none of them are Rhodesian. Of course, the Taiwanese immediately get the point and they all started screaming and laughing and the Kuomintang (KMT) which was running, but they had to shut the machine off, the microphone. But he very cleverly got the point across that they were being controlled by foreigners: the mainland Chinese.

Q: Why is it, do you think, the KMT even allowed those elections?

DONNELLY: Oh, I think they had to. You have to have some semblance; even in Communism they have the local meaningless elections for group leaders and things. You have to have something.

Q: Kaohsiung was in fact a very Taiwanese part of town. The mainlanders were all up in Taipei. If you had some Taiwanese you must have been very popular.

DONNELLY: Well, I got along well with the Taiwanese; I liked them, also I liked a lot of mainlanders I knew there. But because I spoke some Taiwanese and had a lot of Taiwanese contacts I was rather looked on with suspicion by the government.

I'll never forget in 1975 when I came back to work in Washington at the Voice of America, one of my broadcasters there asked me to go to dinner at a Chinese affair where the Minister of Information, Fred Chen, was going to be the speaker. This was in Washington. I said okay and afterwards she said, "I'd like to introduce you to him." Now, I'd never met him. He was head of the information office in Taipei. I'd been in Taiwan all those years but down island. I'd never met this man, and she introduced me to him. She said, "This is my new boss, Neal Donnelly," and he must not have heard my first name and he said to me, "Are you any relation to Neal Donnelly?" I said, "Yes." Obviously he had my dossier that he had been reading because I'd never met him. I think probably they're very suspicious of me, without any reason at all because I never was instrumental in anything.

Maybe he knew my name because of the bombing in Tainan. About three or four days after China was admitted to the UN (United Nations), I think October twelfth it was - I think it was Columbus Day, I was in the office in Tainan. I had a cultural center in Tainan and the one in Kaohsiung. I went back and forth between the two.

Q: Oh, you covered both?

DONNELLY: I covered both, yes.

Q: So there wasn't a separate third office of USIA? It was Tainan?

DONNELLY: No, I had both and also a reading room in Pingdong. So it was a big area. I left the office and Bob Nichols, who was the Taipei deputy, was down visiting at that time and that night I had invited the temple committee from the San Feng Kung Temple in Kaohsiung to dinner. I spent a lot of time in and around temples because I became interested and I thought it was very important to understand the religion of the country. If you want to understand a country, you should understand the religion. I think we're learning that now in Afghanistan.

I had the temple committee, only one of whom could speak a little English, and two who could speak Mandarin. The rest were Taiwanese and they were almost country bumpkinish types. Bob and I just got back from Tainan to Kaohsiung and just sitting down to dinner when the phone rang. It was my chief assistant, K.C. Chuang, in Tainan telling me that our building had been blown up. Now this was incredible. Since February 28, 1947 there had been no terrorist explosions and it was just incredible. So I said, "I'll come right away". The temple committee really didn't understand why I invited them to dinner and left them without eating, but Bob and I rushed back to Tainan and there was very serious damage to the building. A powerful bomb was set outside my office and some students were hurt badly. My janitor was hurt.

Q: Now the explosion was in the evening?

DONNELLY: Yes, right after I left the office, so it was about six o'clock, I suppose.

Q: So that's not too evening; so knowledgeable that there would be people in the building.

DONNELLY: Oh, yes, they knew that. So we went back and there were two boys that were hurt badly; one lost a leg and the other got a hundred or so pieces of wood and things imbedded in his body. He was in the hospital a long time. They were both poor boys, sixteen years old. You know, trying to learn something at USIS and they were from a little fishing village nearby. Very poor. So I got the ambassador, who was McConaughy, I think at the time, to put some money aside from our liquor fund. They sold liquor, as you know, and then made profit; the profit went for one thing or the other. Anyway, he set aside $5000 each for the boys which was enough for them to get a college education. I'm still in contact with them.

Q: Really? What are they doing now?

DONNELLY: One now has got a Ph.D. and his wife has a Ph.D. He is a chemical engineer and is dean of a university in Taiwan now. So something good came of it.

Q: You were saying the bomb was brought into the building?

DONNELLY: Yes, put in between my office and the library.

Q: So the building is open?

DONNELLY: Sure, the building is open. The students were there; it was about six o'clock and the library had students in it.

Q: Now the issue is who claims credit or who gets blamed for this? I mean, as you say, this was just weeks after China gets into the UN. Kissinger has already gone to China and in July of '71 Nixon announces that he is going to go to China in February of '72 and then the vote is taken in the UN on the representation issue and Beijing enters the UN. Shortly after that, there's this explosion.

DONNELLY: I believe, now we can check this, but I believe China entered the UN before Kissinger went to China.

Q: No, before Nixon went.

DONNELLY: Before Kissinger. Because I learned of Kissinger going to China when I was transferred to Taipei, and this happened before.

Q: Hum.

DONNELLY: No, China entered the UN before Kissinger went to China. The UN vote, as you recall, the balance of those in favor and against kept slipping and at one point they got in without the help of the United States. I'm pretty sure of that.

Q: Well, I just checked it so?

DONNELLY: Oh, you checked it?

Q: Yes, Kissinger went secretly in early '71 and in July of '71 Nixon announced that he'd been invited as a result of the previous tour. So, by July of '71, Nixon makes public his invitation to go to China in February of '72. So this event of yours is then July/August of '71.

DONNELLY: No, It's October of probably '70. China was in the UN before Kissinger went to China. I don't know how I can check this, but I will.

Q: Yes, it'd be interesting.

DONNELLY: China was in the UN before Kissinger went.

Q: Coming back to the point though, whose bomb?

DONNELLY: When we got there, my chief assistant was livid because there were about four or five different KMT security groups, the garrison command, the police, their FBthey called them ministry or bureau or something, and they're all in there, and my assistant, a Taiwanese said, "They're in here destroying evidence." In any event, they said they were going to question every person on the island to find out. Finally they blamed a young Taiwanese student and they put him in jail. Treated him nicely in jail and then let him out. He came to the United States later and I met him; he did not do it. The question is, who at that time had access to explosives? I was told by a friendly magistrate that it was the son of a general who was mad because China got into the UN, but I can't confirm that. But who would have access to explosives in an island that's so tightly controlled?

Q: That's a singularly good point.

DONNELLY: Who would be mad at the United States? Simply not the Taiwanese; we were a beacon for the Taiwanese.

Q: Why do you say that? A beacon in what sense? Were we very public in our criticism of the Kuomintang's efforts.

DONNELLY: The United States, as you well know and everybody knows, is a democratic society and we were pushing democracy in all sorts of ways. We were sending a lot of students from Taiwan, both mainlanders and Taiwanese, to the United States and they liked what they saw. They saw us as a counter balance. If the United States wasn't there, God knows how repressive the regime of Chiang Kai-shek would've been.

Q: So they were aware that by programs and by profile we were making it a little bit easier for them, even on the island?

DONNELLY: I think that's really true in every country; in the world probably.

Q: Without sanctions; don't you have to put sanctions on people first?

DONNELLY: Well, I wouldn't, but then I'm not running things.

Q: While you're in Kaohsiung, Vietnam is still around, in fact, there's Tet in '68. Are any of those issues affecting your presentation in your public speeches when you're addressing these issues?

DONNELLY: In Taiwan you didn't have to apologize for being an anti-communist.

Q: (laughs) It made your job very easy.

DONNELLY: It didn't affect it at all, no.

Q: On the other hand, you had the Tet Spring of August '68 in this timeframe.

DONNELLY: Yes, again, they were interested in it, but we didn't have to address that specifically.

Q: Actually, at this time in Taiwan, maybe not down in the south, but certainly up in the north, there was a series of student demonstrations on the Diao Yu T'ai issue, which are these small islands equally claimed by the Japanese and China. The Japanese seemed to be getting the upper hand. This was 1970. Did you see any student demonstrations down in your area?

DONNELLY: It was the Senkaku island dispute. As a matter of fact, there had been no student demonstrations in Taiwan since 1947. There was Marshal Law; they were not allowed to have student demonstrations. The first student demonstration was at USIS, Tainan. I got a call from the same guy, K.C. Chuang. He said, "Get up here right away. There's a student demonstration." I said, "Impossible; you can't have one." What had happened is fifty students walked from Chung Kung University, an engineering university in Tainan, passed a police station to USIS and demonstrated. How were they allowed to do that? You can't have a demonstration. The way they were able to do it is that the fifty of them were overseas Chinese students; they were from Singapore and places like that, so the police weren't going to touch them. They came and demanded that we force the Senkaku question; we force the Japanese to accept that it is Chinese. I called Taipei for instructions before I went up to Tainan; I called from Kaohsiung to Taipei to the political officer and he said, "Invite a couple of the students in and listen to them and don't promise them anything."

Q: Who was in Taipei at the time?

DONNELLY: It might have been Leo Moser. The ambassador was McConaughy, I'm sure. The political officer might have been Leo Moser.

In any event, I went out there and there were the fifty students outside raising their arms and stuff like that and the police looking sheepish because they know these guys shouldn't be doing that, but they don't know what to do about it. I went in and talked to the leaders and they kept talking about the sovereignty and whatnot and I kept saying, "Yes, yes, yes," until they were sick of hearing me say, "Yes, yes, yes," and then they left. That was the first demonstration. Then the next two or three days, because the ice had been broken, the students in Taida, Taiwan National University, thought if these people could get away with it in Tainan then there had to be demonstrations in Taipei. But it was the fifty overseas Chinese students who came to my office who started the whole thing.

Q: It's a very nationalistic issue for China; this claim to these islands that sit between Taiwan and Japan. I understand from some academic readings that this nationalism just really took over on Taida campus and some people got a little excited and went a little too far.

DONNELLY: Well, it was pent up emotions for a lot of things, obviously for the nationalistic idea, but also just to demonstrate. Students like to demonstrate; they had a chance now and they had a cause. In Taipei they took it. They bused people in. But they wouldn't have done it if it weren't for those fifty overseas students who took the bull by the horns and marched to my center in Tainan.

Q: Did you know a Taiwanese nationalist by the name of Peng Ming-min at this time?

DONNELLY: Not at the time; I've met him later. When he was ferreted out of Taiwan, I think that was probably 1967, he went to a Nordic country first and then finally to the United States; the University of Michigan, I believe. I've met him since. He became the head of FAPA, the Foremost Association for Public Affairs in Washington.

Q: The United States was implicated in his surreptitious departure. Did you feel anything about that or did anybody talk to you about that because you're down in the very Taiwanese area of the island?

DONNELLY: Yes, there's a lot of speculation.

Q: Again, not bad for U.S. image?

DONNELLY: Not among the Taiwanese. There were two, probably men of course, and then there was a guy by the name of Thornberry who got out of the island surreptitiously. The way Peng Ming-min got out, there's a lot of speculation; the Kuomintang thought that he either flew out from the American airbase south of Taichung, CCK Airbase, or he went out on a U.S. navy ship from Kaohsiung Harbor. As a matter of fact, he went on a Japanese visa; he had a beard and an artificial arm. He lost an arm, you know. He was in Japan studying in Hiroshima or Nagasaki and he lost an arm in the atomic bomb blast and has an artificial arm now. He was on more or less under loose house arrest because he had been a favorite of the former vice president. But he slipped out with a beard, an artificial arm and a Japanese passport; he left that way. We had nothing to do with it.

Q: Another event that occurs at this time is CCK (Chiang Ching-kuo) is traveling in America and there is an assassination attempt on the trip in 1970. Was there any repercussions that you noticed in the press or the conversations you were having with people?

DONNELLY: I was at a party with some Taiwanese right after it and one of the Taiwanese (this isn't very nice to report I guesit doesn't reflect favorably on him) was talking to me and he said, "Just like a Taiwanese; he can't shoot straight." That's about the only effect. The Chinese government didn't blame America for that and CCK actually was pretty big about it himself. He didn't make a big vendetta over it.

Q: Is there anything else about Kaohsiung or Tainan that we haven't covered? Basically it's your own little empire in Southern Taiwan; you're the only American official.

DONNELLY: It was wonderful. I enjoyed it a lot. I spent a lot of time riding around the island on bicycles and stopping in little villages and spending the night. I got to know the people very well and had a very nice time.

Q: Are you beginning to see the economic expansion? This is now 1970, 1971.

DONNELLY: Especially with the Kaohsiung Processing Zone, yes. Every year people had a little bit more; this year they'd buy a refrigerator, next year they'd buy a motorcycle. Every year they got a little better. That was why there wasn't a great deal of uprising against the Kuomintang because people's lives were getting better.

Q: I'm afraid to ask, but in August '71 you went up to Taipei; was this personnel or serendipity again?

DONNELLY: I was ordered up by Bob Nichols, who was the deputy. He said, "You've been down there too long."

Q: (laughs) Oh, they noticed you were down there?

DONNELLY: Yes. He said, "It's not good for your career." I said, "Well, I don't care. I like it here." This may sound strange to a lot of Foreign Service Officers who come in as young officers hoping to be ambassador, but I just enjoyed it and I didn't want to go to Taipei, but I was ordered up so I had no choice.

Q: You were the cultural officer, so USIA had a fairly large program in Taipei? How many officers?

DONNELLY: Yes. It had about ten officers and it had a book program, a magazine, a lot of lectures, a big library; all sorts of things.

Q: What's the magazine and how does that work into this?

DONNELLY: Student Review; Student Review was a magazine put together in Taiwan based on articles written in Washington and send out to countries. It was mostly about America, although we'd have some articles written locally about how modern Taiwan was becoming.

Q: This was in English language?

DONNELLY: No, it was bilingual, which made it useful to students. They printed about 70,000 in Manila; there was a USIS printing plant in Manila. Before I became Culture Affairs Officer to Taipei they would send them in bulk to schools for distribution. But I knew from going and visiting schools that the magazines would just sit in the corner. It was a waste of money. I wanted to put a price on the magazine and sell it. I had a hell of a time convincing anybody to do this. Finally they let me do it and they said the circulation would drop. I said, "Half the circulation of people reading it and passing them on is better." It did drop; it dropped about 30,000, but people were buying it and I knew they would buy it because it's bilingual; they could read English and if they don't know what the word means they can glance over at the Chinese on the opposite page. It sold and it was a success.

Q: Was the translation being done in Manila or just the printing?

DONNELLY: Oh no, the translation was being done at the office in Taipei.

Q: So you had full editorial control?

DONNELLY: Yes.

Q: And that was under you as the cultural officer?

DONNELLY: Yes. I think I was called the publication officer at that time. Student Review was the biggest thing we did. We had other books and things. One thing I might mention about Kaohsiung?

After the bombing of the cultural center in Tainan, it took three months or more to put the building together again; there was extensive damage. Actually the Taiwan government paid for most or all of it. We rearranged the building, expanded rooms, and partitioned others. We ended up with an empty room about twelve feet by eighteen feet, something like that, and we decided to use that room and make it available to local young artists to hang pictures.

We got a hold of a well-known local artist and asked him if he would make a committee up and select young artists to hang their pictures there for a couple weeks at a time, but the stipulation was that there could be no sales made. This was only to get them started. We did that and it was a very successful program, so we duplicated it in Kaohsiung and then the USIS branch in Taichung also made a little gallery. Finally Taipei did the same thing. So we had four art galleries going in the early '70s showing art of young artists of some quality; the quality was judged by local established artists. I think that almost any of the young artists over there in those days got their start in the USIS gallery which we began in Tainan.

Q: But you mention that there was some resistance on your boss' part.

DONNELLY: Well, the resistance came later when people in Washington found out that we were doing this and told us it's not the USIS' mission to promote local artists. But I had a different take on it; it seems to me that it established a great deal of goodwill and it was a rather democratic thing to do. Anyway, we did it as long as I was in Taiwan and right up until the '80s when I went back.

As a matter of fact, in the late 1970s when I went back for my second time in Taiwan and was head of the USIS in Taipei, we had probably the most famous and the most successful art exhibit in the whole country in our center. Backing up some years to when we opened in Tainan, there was a fisherman who started painting late in life, sort of a Grandma Moses type, and he came to our center and asked my assistant if he would put up his paintings. My assistant looked at him, and they looked like childish stuff, and said, "No, no, get out of here," so the guy went back crushed. He was a man by the name of Hung Tung; he was a fisherman and his wife sold incense in the local temple in a little coastal town called Pei Men. One day he saw his son drawing Chinese characters and he took up a pen and drew one of the characters and it looked like a man, so he put a head on it and arms and said, "Oh, I can draw," and so he went and got cheap paper and cheap paints and started painting. He told his wife, "Now I'm an artist; I don't work, I draw," and he drew a couple hundred of these really amazing paintings that I'm told are very good.

Some years after he was rejected by our USIS Tainan guy, he went to the artist who we had running the committee, a man by the name of Tseng Pei-yao, and he knocked on his door and said in Taiwanese, "I know you're an artist. I've been to an art exhibit today and I want you to look at some paintings that a friend of mine did," and Tseng looked him and said, "They're marvelous, they're wonderful." He said, "I did them," so Tseng contacted us in Taipei - at this time I had gone to Taipei, and said that he'd like to exhibit this man's work. In the meantime, a very small magazine had printed some of his pictures and they were well received, so we said okay, and we scheduled an exhibit. Before the exhibit we had a press conference; he was a very funny guy who gave sort of off-the-wall answers to whatever question he was asked and he generated a lot of interest, plus the fact that he was Taiwanese and his paintings had no classical Chineseness in them at all. He generated interest and when we opened the exhibit at ten o'clock on, I think it was a Saturday morning, there were 200 people outside waiting to get in. The story got around that this guy's exhibit was fantastic and for two weeks we had people come who had never been to an exhibit in their life; ladies with babies on their backs. All of them were crowding in so we had to open up a back door of our gallery because we couldn't let people in and out the same door. We had to limit it to 200 in there at a time and at all times there were people lined up. It was a real shocker; it was so much of a shock that the established artists were upset and they had what the communists would call a "struggle session" against him, saying, "Who is this guy? He hasn't done what we've done. I've spent all my life drawing bamboo and this guy is?" They really sort of denounced him.

He became very famous and he wouldn't sell any of his paintings. He was poor; he didn't have any money, and he wouldn't sell any of his paintings. He said all he wanted was the government to repair the roof in his house and he'd give them the paintings. He was a very simple man. The magistrate in Tainan Hsien said he would build him a house and after he said that, the government in Taipei came down like a ton of bricks on the magistrate and he withdrew the offer. I visited the man many times later; he lived in a hovel, really. He died and after he died of course his relatives started to sell his paintings and some of them, I'm told, are selling for U.S. $20,000.

Q: It's a great story, but the conflict between Taipei and the Tainan magistrate, is that an expression of artistic conflict or the mainlander Taiwanese?

DONNELLY: It's political.

Q: It's political. It's the ethnic division on the island again.

DONNELLY: The artists who objected to him, not all artists of course, were the established artists. I mentioned before Chung Kung University in Tainan, I can illustrate some of the problems between the Taiwanese and the mainlanders, for a couple years I got permission from the president of the university to audit a history course. I wanted to audit a history course for language comprehension training. It was a lady teacher; a mainland teacher. She taught modern Chinese history. Well, modern Chinese history is just fraught with all sorts of contradictions. But in those two years that I was there, she would get up and speak and no student asked any question of her at all about what she said. That's just the way history classes were conducted in that school and probably in other schools.

At one cocktail party, I met her and we were talking about a friend of mine who is a Dutchman, but a Taoist priest. He was an anthropologist and a sociologist, but he'd become a Taoist priest so he could do his research. This lady was livid at this man who lived in Tainan, a man by the name of Kristofer (Rick) Schipper, because, she said, "We are here in this country trying to teach these people about what they're doing is superstitious and you foreigners come over here and promote it." She was a Christian, of course.

Q: Actually, I wanted to ask you, Tainan also was the center of the Taiwan Presbyterian Church. Did you come across them?

DONNELLY: The Presbyterian Church is interesting. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the foreigners carved up China into spheres of influence; the Germans got the Shantung Peninsula and the Russians got this and the Japanese got that. It looked like such a good idea that the missionary groups informally did the same thing. The Baptists were concentrated in one area. But I say the missionaries; this is all but the Catholics. The Catholics didn't join in on this, they were all over. But the Presbyterians got Fujian and Taiwan. Taiwan was further divided. The northern part of Taiwan was pretty much the preserve of the Canadian Presbyterians and the southern part the British/English Presbyterians. That's why there are two theological seminaries in Taiwan; one in Taipei and one in Tainan. The one in Taipei for a long time had a Canadian cast. You have Mackey Hospital in Taipei; Dr. Mackey was a Canadian missionary. In southern Taiwan you have the British.

When I was there, the number two man in the theological seminary (the number one man was a Taiwanese) was a British minister by the name of Bebe and I knew him quite well. Because of that, almost all of your intellectual, western oriented Taiwanese in the early part of the Chiang Kai-shek regime and in the Japanese time, would be Presbyterian because the Presbyterians were on the ground as missionaries, and what do missionaries do? Missionaries educate. So the educated Taiwanese, for the most part, would be Presbyterians and they would for the most part be the most dangerous to the regime; the rebels. So, the Taiwan Independence Movement had a heavy, heavy Presbyterian cast to it.

Q: Did USIA have any association with their seminary or did you go lecture on the campus from time to time?

DONNELLY: No, I did not. I attended a stage performance there and I had lunch over there a couple times, but only as an individual, not as a government function.

Q: You were talking earlier about traveling around between Kaohsiung and Tainan on bicycle. What was the road net like in those days? We're talking the late '60s.

DONNELLY: In those days there was a decent paved road between Taiwan and Kaohsiung, but I would travel secondary roads on bicycle. I didn't want to be on what we called "suicide alley"; everyday you'd see an awful accident when you're driving there. Not only that, but I travel on my bike all over the place. I put my bicycle on a train and then get off at a place and bicycle back. There was a guy by the name of Dave Hughes, who was a Foreign Service Officer for a time; we bicycled from Souao on the east coast, 300 kilometers down to Taitung. Along that mountain road it took us five and a half days. It was quite an adventure.

Q: Had you been staying at the inns?

DONNELLY: We stayed at the inns except one night. We were between little towns; we were about twenty kilometers from one town to the other and we came to a little hamlet. The hamlet was called Ho Ping which means peace. There were fourteen thatched roof houses there and it was getting dark and we didn't have any lights on our bikes so we couldn't drive in the dark. We stopped in the middle of this little hamlet and a lady came out and we asked her, "Is there a restaurant here?" She said, "No." "Is there a little inn?" "No." Well, we stood looking at each other and her husband came along and he said, "Well you can spend the night with us." So he brought us in and they gave us a meal; it was rice, regular rice, with a vegetable dish with something like bok choy or cabbage and just maybe a sliver or two of pork and boiled water. That tasted really good then.

They were going to put us up in their one room place. They were going to give us their bed and then the children and they would find someplace to sleep. A policeman came. Now along the border they have border police and this was out on the eastern shore. He talked to them, but didn't talk to us. He wanted to know what we were doing there and I could sense that there was trouble for this family. They were kind to us and we were causing trouble. So he left and pretty soon his superior came; his superior was a sergeant or something. He came and he talked to us. He said, "Who are you?" and we told him. I said, "I'm with the embassy," and he said, "Why did you pick this particular family to come to?" I could see, oh God, these people are in for it. At about that time the neighbor came. They were Taiwanese but the neighbor was an old soldier from the mainland. He offered for us to spend the night at his house. So we went over and before we got to bed he said, "Well, we've got to have a drink," and of course if a Chinese invites you to drink, you better drink. He had this little thatched house with a mud floor. So we said okay and he went over and got a five gallon can, you know the type you see on the back of jeeps, a gasoline can, and he brought it over. He had made his own moonshine; white lightning. So he started pouring it into little cups, and I thought, oh, my God Almighty. So, we toasted and I drank it. We did this about three or four times. It was awful. Then we went to bed. My friend and I shared the bed. I woke up in the morning and I thought, 'Boy I can see!' I thought I would probably be blind. Dave said, "What do you mean?" "That was awful stuff. What did it do to me?" He said, "You didn't drink it, did you?" and I said, "Of course. I saw you drink it." He said, "No, I poured it on the floor." Anyway, this goes to show the kindness of the these people towards us and the trouble they could've gotten into.

Q: Yes. The Mainlander guy can invite you to his house, but the Taiwanese were compromised by extending the same hospitality. When you were down in Kaohsiung, how much supervision were you getting from your bosses in Taipei?

DONNELLY: Well, I didn't get much. I was grateful for that. When I applied for USIA, there was a plaque on a building at 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue. The plaque read: "Telling America's Story to the World." I guess I did that best by not having a lot of direction. I felt that if the people better understood our policy, which I could explain, then there wouldn't be so many misunderstandings and wars and all sorts of trouble. I modestly think that I might have been successful with less direction than with more direction.

Q: Did you go up to Taipei from time to time?

DONNELLY: The first couple of years Ken Boyle was the PAO, I went up about four times a year. Travel wasn't very easy, nor was telephone communication. The Taiwan telephone system was pretty bad. To call there, we would use military field phones and hook up to a U.S. Army net. I would get through that way. But it wasn't easy. You'd be shouting into the phone. To go up by train, it took eight hours in those days.

Q: So your telephone communication in those days was to hook you into the U.S. military, so the U.S. military was in another place in Taiwan and it had its own net?

DONNELLY: North of Kaohsiung was a naval base. There was an American contingent there.

Q: After having all this independence and all this time in Taiwan to yourself, Taipei discovers you and decides that you better come up there with them in August of '71. Can you describe you duties in Taipei?

DONNELLY: The first year I was there, the main thing I did was the magazine Student Review. It was a bilingual... That was my main duty, and then other cultural duties from time to time.

Q: Did you get involved with the local television and movie people?

DONNELLY: No.

Q: So you were all print.

DONNELLY: For the most part, yes.

Q: Did USIA have any contact?

DONNELLY: Yes, they did. As a matter of fact, one of our local boys was a former movie actor and he had a lot of contact with them, but we really didn't do much with movies. The movie industry was fairly well developed by that time.

Q: Were the local movies popular?

DONNELLY: Oh, yes, sure.

Q: I'm under the impression that the movie The Sand Pebbles, which was one of Steve McQueen's first movies, was actually filmed in Tanshui, on that part of the river.

DONNELLY: It may have been, some of it, but my understanding was that it was filmed in the Philippines.

Q: Could be most of the scenes. I was once told though that it was banned in Taiwan, that they weren't allowed to see it.

DONNELLY: It was not complimentary to the nationalist soldiers. There were American movies, I guess; I didn't go to movies that much. I did go sometimes to the local movies for language comprehension. One of the movie houses I went to, which had Taiwanese movies, was just a very small shed with wooden benches and a dirt floor. It's nothing like that now. This movie house in Kaohsiung was situated between two brothels. I'll never forget taking my eight year old daughter to see a funny Taiwanese movie and thinking, if she only knew where the hell she was. There were two brothel areas. One was behind city hall; another one of those buildings by the railroad station.

Q: You were saying though there's Taiwanese language movies. How did that fit with the KMT's language requirement. For radio and television, they only allowed a couple of hours in Taiwanese.

DONNELLY: They would allow the weather report in Taiwanese. That's very important for the fisherman and the firemen and whatnot. The Taiwanese movies were not political in any way. They were slapstick, guys' pants falling down. I think it didn't bother them much.

Q: But they had that kind of a policy. Did that become a problem for us? I suppose we were putting out reading materials using the characters.

DONNELLY: It was never a problem for USIA in any way. The government's language policies didn't hinder us in any way.

Q: Now at the time that you were the cultural affairs officer, August '71 to June '72, you had to handle the Nixon trip to China which was February of '72. Did that make much of a blip on your screen?

DONNELLY: Not on my screen. The political officer had to handle that with the counterparts. It didn't bother us. It was strange how the people... Obviously, the mainland Chinese were very upset. The Taiwanese seemed to think it was not a bad idea, that it might in some ways help them. Our staff was about half mainlander and half Taiwanese. The Taiwanese were not bothered one bit about it. It may break the cycle and weaken the Kuomintang. Kuomintang, the mainlanders, were very upset. Of course they were very quiet. They were always quite assertive in the office because they were on top, but they weren't sure where they were with Nixon. It took a while to get back.

Q: Were you involved with the Fulbright Program?

DONNELLY: Yes, I was as the cultural affairs officer, I was on the Fulbright Committee. Then I was chairman of the Fulbright Committee when I became PAO.

Q: Can you explain how this program works and what its intent was?

DONNELLY: It's a two way cultural exchange. The Fulbright professors are brought from America to teach in local universities. The other direction for the most part was sending graduate students to the United States for advanced degrees. We had a Fulbright foundation equipped with an executive director, a Chinese man. They would be placed in universities. Then when they would give out grants to Chinese students who wanted to go to the United States for their studies, they would be screened initially by the Fulbright organization that was housed in the USIS building, a large old building dating from the Japanese occupation of Taiwan. It was a Japanese government building and when the mainlanders came after the Second World War, they made it the provincial legislative building. So up until the late 1950's, the provincial legislature met in that building and then when they left and had a permanent home south of Taichung, that building was rented to USIS.

Q: Were there any other local institutions that you worked closely with? I understand there was a joint council for cooperation in humanities and social sciences.

DONNELLY: No, but I did work closely with the language center which was attached to the University of Tai Ta (Taiwan National University) and that taught English to college students, mainly those wishing to go to America. I was a member of that board and once a month I'd go over and listen to the meetings and look at their budget. That's about it. Make sure they were doing the right thing.

Q: Because early on there was a number of joint councils for this and that and now I get the impression that as Taiwan begins to expand they're doing a lot more of their own?

DONNELLY: In any event, I was not aware of that council that you mentioned.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that point, '71 to '72?

DONNELLY: Certainly in '72 it probably was still Walter McConaughy and then later it was Leonard Unger. Walter McConaughy was a very interesting guy. When he was a young Foreign Service Officer, his first post was attached to what was the embassy in Tokyo and he was assigned to the consulate in Taipei because Taiwan was part of Japan. Later he came back to Taiwan as the ambassador and lived in the same house where he had lived as a young consular officer. Very interesting. One of the local administrative officer's father was Ambassador McConaughy's rickshaw driver when he was a young FSO (Foreign Service Officer). Then Unger; Unger was the last ambassador to Taiwan.

Q: Right. Actually he was in Bangkok before Taipei and I think he left Bangkok in late '73, early '74.

DONNELLY: Something like that, yes.

Q: Is there anything else you want to use the Taipei cultural job for to illustrate USIA job definitions, policy, directions?

DONNELLY: Do you mean the first or second time I was there?

Q: The second time; around '72.

DONNELLY: Just that time? Not '75?

Q: No. Again this is the aftermath of the Tiao Yu T'ai (Senkakus) student demonstrations and whatnot, but that was over by the time you got to Taipei?

DONNELLY: It was over very quickly because it was a threat not to the United States, but to the government.

Q: Well this is interesting; in one sense remains contemporary because we're looking at Beijing now and how they're handling their student nationalism, so here you have two Leninist parties struggling with the same problem. That is?

DONNELLY: The same people, Chinese.

Q: And the same people.

DONNELLY: Yes, there's a lot that China can learn from the way Taiwan handled or mishandled.

Q: So your next assignment, '72-'75, is VOA. That means somebody found you and brought you back to Washington. (laughs)

DONNELLY: Yes, they did. I was overseas twelve years without a Washington assignment and people were saying, "How did you do it?" I said, "I didn't. It just happened."

Q: I remember I came into the Foreign Service in '71 and when we were in Rosslyn for the A-100 class one day, somebody pointed at some gentleman down the hall and whispered, "This is his first time back and he left during the Eisenhower Administration."

DONNELLY: (laughs) Well, actually I went overseas during the Eisenhower Administration.

Q: There you go; maybe you were?

DONNELLY: Maybe it was me.

Q: Now you come back to Washington; Voice of America. What does the Voice of America do?

DONNELLY: They broadcast, now I think it's about forty languages, but when I was there I think it was about thirty languages, and we broadcast then in Mandarin only, I think it was about 11 ï¿½ hours a day. We broadcast mainly news, some feature stories and some music, but every hour on the hour that we were on the air we would have a good fifteen minute news broadcast which was all news; you know, no advertising breaking up the news, just straight news. It was in depth. Then there wasn't any CNN (Cable News Network); it was just short-wave VOA, BBC (British Broadcasting Company), and other national broadcasts.

It was very important to Chinese and other people in those days; now not so much with television, etc. But I read recently in the Afghani business that the Afghanis were all at their radios at all timeshort wave radios when they had them, listening to the Voice of America to see what was happening. That's true and it was true then. The VOA was very important.

One problem with China was that we never knew if anybody was listening. Not only that, we never knew if anybody could hear it. Of course, and if you are on the air you wanted to know those two things; can it be heard and is anybody listening. So if you're broadcasting even to someplace like Russia, there are a lot of Americans in Russia that can turn on the radio and say, "Yes, it can be heard here," or "It can be heard there." We could send tourists over to a country to listen all over the place, but we had nobody in China. So, I thought of an idea to find out if somebody was listening. I got a lot of flak over this idea and it didn't really do me good in the long run, but having been in Taiwan all those years, I knew a couple of things. I knew that the Chinese were hungry for English and I also knew that they could learn by rote because I'd been in class with them and I'd seen the way they repeat and repeat and repeat, and they could learn. We had a fifteen minute a day program on English which was nothing in depth, so I thought if we put on a half an hour English program and repeat it three times a day and repeat the same half hour seven days a week, that's twenty-one shots that any Chinese worth his salt could memorize that and could learn English.

Now they need a book. How do you get a book in China? I thought, well, I knew that in Taiwan the English 900 Series, which was a Macmillan Series, was very popular. What it is, is 900 basic sentences and if you memorize these sentences you have memorized every grammar rule there is plus a lot of vocabulary. So I went to Macmillan and said, "Could you sell us these books very cheaply?" The 900 sentences were in sixty lessons; fifteen sentences per lesson. They said, "We'll sell you the six volume book, a dollar a book, $6. So we'll give you some sort of discount." So I went to the program manager at VOA and said, "I want to do this," and they said, "How are you going to get the books to the people?" I said, "What I will do is I will put an advertisement on the air saying we're doing this and any Chinese that wants to have a book could go to their corner bookstore and buy the book. However, if you are in an area where they don't have a corner bookstore, you could write to a P.O. box in Hong Kong and we'll send you the book free.

Well, I got a lot of flak; for one thing they said, "This is a news organization; we're not an educational organization." I kept pushing and pushing and kept getting flak and finally the division director said he'd let me do it. He told me later he'd let me do it only to see me fail. Within the first month, we had two hundred letters from all over China and they were ecstatic and going up to the Hill and saying, "Look, we've got all these listeners!" and the letters kept coming in and coming in and coming in. Then we started learning, when Americans were finally allowed to go to China, they found out that the book was pirated in China.

Q: (laughs) Of course.

DONNELLY: Macmillan knew that would happen, but I told Macmillan that the Chinese are product loyal and it would be to their benefit in the long run.

I'll never forget, one time maybe fifteen or twenty years after this, a Chinese was in the States and I was talking to him, I was guiding him around someplace, and I said, "Your English is very good. Where did you learn it?" and he said, "English 900." So, it was successful.

Q: And that program went on the air when?

DONNELLY: Let me see if I can get the date. It was January 1st, 1973.

Q: So it takes you one quarter to convince the powers that be to take this experiment. But here you have a news organization; a broadcast organization that has never sought any feedback from an audience? Never checked because they have no way? So how did they justify themselves to the?

DONNELLY: There was no mail between China and the United States. In those days there was absolutely no contact. They hadn't had a letter in twenty-five years because the Chinese wouldn't forward it and the Chinese wouldn't dare write to the United States. You write to the United States and you've got the thought police down on you.

It may be hard for young people today to understand what a complete wall of silence was between the United States and China. There was just no cultural contact, no academic contact, no mail, no anything. But then they got 200 letters sent to Hong Kong in the first month.

Q: But see, now, you'd been in Hong Kong so you knew that that's where China leaked, if you will.

DONNELLY: Yes, that's right.

Q: And that it would be acceptable to send a letter to Hong Kong where it wouldn't be acceptable to send a letter to the United States.

DONNELLY: The Chinese knew that letters to Hong Kong would often transfer to Taiwan or to the States or someplace, but they allowed that.

Q: Right, as long as it's not out front.

DONNELLY: Yes, face.

Q: Face; you can get a lot done.

DONNELLY: As long as your face is preserved.

Q: When I was there in the '80s, mainlanders would travel to the mainland all the time through Hong Kong and as long as they didn't tout it, both sides allowed it to happen.

DONNELLY: Sure.

Q: But you were the first guy to go through Hong Kong and know that that mailbox was there to be used.

DONNELLY: Well, but there was just so much resistance on the part of the management there. Fortunately the head of VOA at that time, a guy by the name of Ken Giddens, he was a political appointee during the Nixon years and he was a conservative guy, but a very decent guy who I think probably in the end was the reason I was able to get it done; he'd backed it up.

Q: The VOA had Chinese language broadcast for the mainland only? Can you pick it up in Taiwan?

DONNELLY: You can pick it up any place. Until English 900 requests for the book, we got no letters from the mainland, but we would get letters from ships at sea because the Chinese sailors could listen, wherever they were. We broadcast towards China, but the atmosphere is such that sometimes it bounces all over the place. Obviously they could hear it in Taiwan clear as a bell. We had listeners in Taiwan, I guess, but they could get most of what they wanted from other ways. But the people in China had no other way of getting independent news.

Q: As the Chinese branch chief, how many people did you have working for you? How was it organized; was it organized by languages like that?

DONNELLY: We only had one language then; now I think they've brought Cantonese back. We had sixty-two people, I think, and we had a news service, a features service and a production service. The producers are the technical guys and then the features people would write color pieces and whatnot. The news was the heart of it.

Q: We're twenty-five years and one CNN later, and now in the press there are issues about independents in VOA. The State Department being critical of stuff they put on. Did those kinds of issues arise at the time that you were?

DONNELLY: Yes, they did. VOA was jealous of its independents, but we know we all get our paycheck from the U.S. government. The newsmen overseas were particularly jealous. They wanted to be trench coat journalists. They went too far, I think. A VOA journalist overseas would not, for example, go to an embassy and talk to a political officer because he didn't want people to think that he was being fed information where Joe Alsop went to the embassy and the consulate regularly and also Joe Kraff. All of them, any journalist worth his salt, Bob Elegant, checked in with the political officer, but VOA correspondents wouldn't.

Q: Who was VOA hiring as its correspondents?

DONNELLY: Well they weren't Foreign Service Officers; most of the VOA staff were what we'd call domestic staff. The Foreign Service Officers at VOA were there on two or three year assignments.

Q: I'm looking at the correspondents who were so jealous of their independents? Were they just average Americans or?

DONNELLY: Yes. They were just guys. A lot of them were former newsmen for other papers. So they were jealous of their independence.

We had a big problem with the boat people during the wind down of the Vietnam War. The State Department did not want us to broadcast anything about the boat people because if we broadcast that the boat people made it to Manila, for example, the State Department was afraid that that would encourage other Vietnamese to leave on boats and maybe to leave to be pirated or raped or drowned. So they wanted us to lay off the stories of boat people and I would get calls from congress to give them transcripts of everything we had said about boat people in the last month or so. One time I had to go to congress and sit there on the witness chair, but luckily I wasn't called upon.

Q: Saigon falls in April of 1975 toward the end of your tour. There were some big American news stories; the Nixon resignation. How did the VOA cover that? Was there anything unique there?

DONNELLY: No, just straight.

Q: At this time, some things are happening in Taiwan. Chiang Kai-shek dies in '75. Did that impact on anything?

DONNELLY: We reported it straight. That's all. It was easy at VOA; you just reported straight and every now and then there'd be a little flak. We had a rule that you had to double source everything which meant that sometimes the VOA was a little slower than other news agencies because they wouldn't immediately go with the report; they'd double source it. So as long as your sources were correct and as far as news was concerned, the news came to us from the news room. I didn't make up the news; it would come to us and we'd select what we want and what we don't want. But as long as we didn't monkey with the news, we double sourced it, kept it straight, we didn't have to worry about anything.

Q: In these three years did congress pay you any particular attention?

DONNELLY: No, I can't think of anything in particular. Every now and then you'd get a call from congress saying, "We want to see what you've said about something," but you just take a copy of the file and send it over and that's the end of it.

Q: What would be the source of that sort of request?

DONNELLY: It would come through our front office and it obviously came from a congressional staffer. I wouldn't know who it was.

Q: But that was a fairly standard kind of request to be made?

DONNELLY: Yes.

Q: VOA is sort of part of the international, not only news, but was part of the, I want to say competition, but the Cold War with the Soviet bloc. But you're there now at a time in which Nixon has gone to China, there's the liaison office set up in Beijing. Did you get any sense that things were now different; that things were now operating in a slightly different environment in China?

DONNELLY: Very little. One thing we did, we followed the American news organizations in the State Department in changing the name of some Chinese. You know, Peking became Beijing, for example. With everybody except for those in the China branch mispronouncing it, calling it "Bayjeeng", when it's Beijing, not Peking anymore. Just a few things like that; we started using the proper name for the People's Republic of China and we were very careful about what we reported on Taiwan, but just straight.

Q: Some of the people working in VOA are immigrants, the Chinese, the change to finally recognizing and using the People's Republic of China, was of significance to them?

DONNELLY: I would say it varied, but most of them, all of what we in Taiwan would call mainlanders, about half of them were people that had come from the mainland to the United States and about the other half were people who had come to the United States through Taiwan or actually some of them even were born in Taiwan, but of mainland parents. Their Chinese was excellent.

I think you could say they were all more or less anti-communist and some of them even had relatives in the Taiwan, Republic of China Embassy, the Taiwan Embassy it would've been when they had an embassy here. But I think that all of them are proud of China and the fact that China is now China and not Taiwan. They're quite proud of the fact that China now is taking a place on the national scene and flexing its muscles. I think probably every one of them now probably has been back to China and is quite proud of it. I think that they were glad that China was shucking some of the dictatorial trappings of communism and they could see that it was going in the right direction. They didn't cause a problem; nobody quit because we were handling Taiwan with kid gloves.

Q: Just by way of background, in VOA for the Asian section, was there also a Japanese section and Burmese and Thai etc. or just was the Soviet Bloc, if you will. The Vietnamese, the Chinese?

DONNELLY: In the East Asia and Pacific Division there was no Japanese. We'd record a feed for the Philippines once a week; not the China branch, but the division had one. The division had a Thai, Indonesian, and the Indonesian language would be for Malay as well; same language. Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, Burmese. In that division which I later headed, we had 160 people.

I'll back up to the feeling about China. The Chinese, among the people there, they were all anti-communist certainly, but almost none had any sympathy for Taiwanese. That's pretty true with most mainland Chinese. A lot of them, I just had this conversation with a Chinese the other day, they object to Taiwanese because the Taiwanese are interested in independence and they're interested in independence because as Annette Lu, who is now the vice president, told me, in 1897 China divorced Taiwan. She was referring to the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895) when China ceded Taiwan to Japan after a defeat. "China divorced Taiwan," she said "We want o remarriage." And a lot of Chinese interpret that as denying their Chineseness and the Chinese are verl'm looking for a nice word, not patriotic, but they're quite proud of their Chineseness, and for somebody to deny that seems a bit much. A lot of them don't like Taiwanese very much.

Q: Sounds like the distinction you're drawing though isn't only just a political distinction; independence or a part of China. It's a culturally defined identity.

DONNELLY: The Taiwanese have been tainted in many people's minds by fifty years of Japanese culture and that's the fault of Minister Li Hung-chang at Shimonoseki; it's not the fault of the Taiwanese. The Taiwanese, you'll find out, like Japanese food. What I'm reading and hearing from Taiwanese friends is that the young Taiwanese, especially the young Taiwanese girls, go nuts over anything Japanese. Well that's an insult to a Chinese because the Japanese are responsible for terrible, terrible massacres; the rape of Nanking and, you know, just terrible things in China. Very few Chinese are going to be pro-Japanese. The Taiwanese are, and that's another thing that bothers Mainland Chinese.

Q: I remember when our Chinese colleagues would take us out to dinner, they'd take us to a Chinese restaurant and when our Taiwanese political friends would take us out, we'd go to a Japanese restaurant.

DONNELLY: You bet. That's the way they feel.

Q: Neal, we had just finished your tour as the VOA Chinese branch chief, in June of '75. So, September '75 you show up back in Taiwan. Is that right?

DONNELLY: Yes, that's right.

Q: As the deputy public affairs officer?

DONNELLY: No, as the cultural affairs officer.

Q: The cultural affairs officer?

DONNELLY: I was later made deputy, but first as the cultural affairs officer.

Q: Can you give us a description of the USIA office at that time, and what your duties were?

DONNELLY: I think there were about ten officers there. There was a public affairs officer, a deputy, a cultural affairs officer, assistant cultural affairs officer, a press officer, a publication officer, and then there was a branch post in Kaohsiung which had the Tainan branch under it, and a branch in Taichung.

The cultural affairs officer was a very normal USIS type of cultural affairs; one who arranged lectures of visiting Americans. We had a magazine that we put out, The Student Review, and we distributed some things to universities and had the Fulbright program. The exchange both ways were under the cultural affairs officer. The cultural affairs officer was a member of the Fulbright Board, actually chairman of the board, for a large Fulbright operation in Taiwan at that time.

Q: Now you'd served as a cultural affairs officer in Taiwan at an earlier tour. This is basically coming back to the same job?

DONNELLY: It was the same office, but this time I was in charge of other offices there. In the previous time, I was a cultural affairs officer, but not in charge of the office.

Q: So how many people were working for you then?

DONNELLY: One other officer.

Q: USIA is also interested in the culture that's going on in that country. You were talking earlier about helping out with art exhibits and whatnot, so are you getting around to the press and the movies?

DONNELLY: Not the press; the press officer would do that, or the deputy, which I later became and then I was involved with the press. We were in touch with all of the cultural-type people, of course many college professors and many of the artists and musicians.

Did I mention before about the artist program? I did not?

Q: No.

DONNELLY: We had one. I think I mentioned before that when I was in Kaohsiung and Tainan I started a program of making a room available for local artists to?

Q: Right.

DONNELLY: And they became art galleries. First we did it in Tainan, then we did it in Kaohsiung. Taichung then followed and then in Taipei we did the same thing. We would offer the walls of a room and in Taipei it would be an auditorium, for art exhibits. When I was in Kaohsiung - Tainan, a fisherman came to the office and offered some of his art to put up on the walls and it was Grandma Moses type art. Did I mention this?

Q: Yes.

DONNELLY: My chief assistant said, "No, get out of here, it's no good." Later, when I was in Taipei, he took his art to a Tainan art critic and showed it to him. The man said it's super stuff and contacted us in Taipei and then we had an exhibit of his stuff in Taipei. I didn't mention that before, did I?

Q: Not that it was in Taipei, but you talked about it.

DONNELLY: It was in Taipei and the guy was a fisherman from a very poor area in Tainan County called Pei Men. Anyway, his art was very primitive, but the art critics loved it and when we held the exhibit in Taipei, it was the most successful art exhibit that Taipei had ever seen. People were interested because there was a lot of press comment about this very unusual guy. Before we opened the doors on the day of the exhibit, there were a couple hundred people out the front of our building. The exhibit lasted for two weeks and we extended it then for another week. It was extremely successful. I don't remember what I said before about the paintings.

Q: It was basically Grandma Moses.

One of the things that I wanted to touch on though was here you are, the cultural affairs person in USIA, and you're working in an environment where the Kuomintang as a Leninist party has pretty good control over movies and the art scene and whatnot. Did you see that control lessening or did you see it at all?

DONNELLY: Oh, sure. The government would allow almost anything that was not either political or disruptive of public order, public security, so you wouldn't have any movies or art that was critical of the government. An awful lot of cultural things had a very strong anti-communist message to them. This Grandma Moses-type of artist that I mentioned before was criticized severely by the established artists because his subjects were very much Taiwanese-type subjects: fishermen and puppets. There are puppet shows in Taiwan and opera. He mixed a lot of Japanese-type symbols in his paintings paintings, including a Japanese flag. He was an old man, he'd lived under the Japanese. That infuriated the established artists and they had newspaper articles about what an awful man he was, and how he mistreated his wife and all sorts of things.

The government was pretty much hands off as long as it did not touch on political opposition or affect good public order.

Q: By 1975, you had the Nixon trip to China and the Americans have established a liaison office in China. Did you see any impact from that in your job as you went through your daily routine?

DONNELLY: No, there was nervousness on the part of the mainlanders in Taiwan. Initially, a lot of nervousness, but things calmed down. There was always the worry that we were going to go too far with China, but it didn't affect what we were doing very much. I would say that as far as the cultural scene, it didn't affect it very much.

Q: This is also the time where the economy in Taiwan is picking up. In fact, the government begins the ten special projects; the subway, the down-island highway and whatnot. So I would assume there's quite a bit of economic wealth being generated here.

DONNELLY: I did a great deal of traveling in the countryside and could see every year that the farmers got just a little bit better off and I often thought about a quote from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar; when Caesar was on his way to the senate, he passes by Cassius, one of the conspirators.

Do you know the quote?

Q: I'm not sure what you're leading up to, but I know the quote, yes.

DONNELLY: Caesar looks over at Cassius and he says, "Yon Cassius has a mean and hungry look about him. Let me have fat men about me; men that sleep at night." And I thought, the people in Taiwan were fat at that time and they slept at night. So they were no trouble. But the government kept most everything screwed down very, very tightly. But the people were fat.

Q: What do you mean by "things were screwed down tightly" though?

DONNELLY: Politically. You obviously couldn't have a movie about the 2-2-8 incident or any movie or article in the press that criticized the government. What you could do is criticize individual government officers. You couldn't criticize Chiang Kai-shek or Chiang Ching-kuo themselves, but you could criticize local mayors and things like that. That was acceptable, but you could not criticize the party as such.

Q: One of the things that the Kuomintang had been doing for some time was to reintroduce Chinese culture to the island, which you said had been a Japanese colony. Did you see any of that in your work?

DONNELLY: Well, yes, of course. I may have mentioned that I audited history courses at Cheng Kung University in Tainan. The history was all from the Chinese perspective and in grammar schools, and in middle schools, and in college, all the history was Chinese history. The Taiwanese would complain to me that they would learn about all of the ancient dynasties, but were taught nothing or allowed to learn anything about their own history, which is very interesting history. The fifty years that the Japanese were there, of course was just erased, and the Taiwanese history before that was erased. There was nothing there; it was tacitly banned, I guess. But the Taiwanese were very upset. Now Taiwanese are studying their history. History and culture under the Kuomintang were all mainland Chinese history.

Q: One of the political changes in Taiwan at this time is Chiang Kai-shek dies in the spring of '75 before you arrive, so his son now takes over the reins. Did you see any of that sort of play out?

DONNELLY: Yes, sure. Surprisingly, the son made a great, great effort to appeal to the local people. He would put on a jacket and a baseball cap and go out in the countryside and talk to the farmers. He got general acceptance from the people, I believe. He loosened up martial Law a great deal and eventually, of course, dropped martial law. He realized that the country was too tight. He loosened it up in many, many ways.

I think the majority of Taiwanese appreciated the change from his father's rule, but still, of course, you had people like Wang Sheng and others who were hard-line anti-communists and who didn't like Taiwanese very much. You'll find even today, talking to American-Chinese as I did just last week, about their mistrust and dislike, actually, of Taiwanese because they feel the Taiwanese are denying their Chineseness and when you believe your culture is the most superior in the world and you have somebody who denies it, it's a bit like the Americans who become anti-American like the Taliban fighter (John Walker Lindh); everybody wants his head and nobody has a good word for him. So I think as a group, the Taiwanese have a very bad image among most mainland Chinese; not all, but most.

There is a bit of a change in Taiwan itself; an awful lot of mainlanders are beginning to make accommodation for the majority of people who live there which are Taiwanese. Ch'en Fu (Fred Chen), I'm told, is now learning or has learned to speak Taiwanese. That's an amazing thing.

Q: Now, the administration in Taiwan has changed to Chiang Ching-kuo and it's the Carter Administration in Washington. Is the atmosphere under which USIA is working a little changed budget-wise or in those kinds of ways? Particularly because the Carter Administration is for human rights, too.

DONNELLY: We did lose some personnel, but I don't remember it being under Carter; it was a little later. Carter established something called "zero based budgeting," which you remember. It seemed every president in every administration had some idea about saving money and there was a lot of hoopla, but it all came to nothing. And zero based budgeting came to nothing. As a Foreign Service Officer, you've been through this so many times, they all run together, zero based budgeting and all this. The Chinese government wasn't very happy with the Carter Administration, but there wasn't anything they could do about it.

Q: One of the major events that happened at the time that you were there was the Chung Li incident; the riots during the elections of late 1977. Did you see anything out of that or how the press played it?

DONNELLY: Well, the press played it from the government's standpoint because the press is controlled by the government. There was one independent newspaper called Tzu Li Wan Pao, "Independence Daily," I guess you'd call it. They were a little more reasonable in their treatment, but most of the treatment of the Chung Li incident would be from a government standpoint; that is, a few people were causing trouble and the government took care of it.

Q: A couple of years after that was the Kaohsiung incident. The U.S. recognized China. Normalization was January 1, 1979 and now by December 1979 there's the Kaohsiung incident. How did that affect the atmospherics in which you were operating?

DONNELLY: Almost all the people in the Kaohsiung incident had some connection with America. There was a magazine called Formosa Magazine, Mei Li Tao, "Mei Li Tao" meaning beautiful island. Beautiful Island Magazine. But beautiful island is a translation of the Portuguese word Formosa. The people on this magazine were supporting political candidates in the coming election. The coming election was touted to be a fair and open election. What this magazine did was take a note of candidates and put them all together and when you put all the candidates together, it's a party. Now, the Kuomintang has always allowed independent candidates to run, but they couldn't form a party. Well, this magazine formed sort of a party and it upset the government.

The magazine decided to hold birthday parties where people get up and give speeches and they decided to hold a rally in Kaohsiung before the election in December. I think they held it in early December, I believe, on the UN Human Rights Day; they held it on that day and eight people spoke. The day before the rally, a Mei Li Tao supporter was beaten by the police and so at the rally that night a lot of people showed up with torches and two-by-four pieces of lumber, and the police took this as an excuse to charge the rally and arrest the speakers, and in the process knocked a few heads. There were eight speakers and not all of them were arrested. Some independent politicians who were not even there were arrested. But one of the people who spoke who was not arrested was K'ang Ning-hsiang. Now K'ang was one of the first people to take on the Kuomintang publicly. He was sort of a fearless guy. He grew up in a section of the Wan Hau, where the Lung Shan Temple is. He spoke at the rally, but for some reason he wasn't arrested. But Annette Lu Hsiu-lien and others were arrested and then they, of course, had a trial. Now that was early December; the election was still going on.

Q: Actually twelve months earlier. Normalization was twelve months earlier.

We were about to get into the trials. That would be the spring of 1980. Of course the first thing that happens before the trials is Lin Yi-hsiung's family is murdered.

DONNELLY: The family lived very close to where the U.S. military annex was, which is now the AIT headquarters. Lin's mother and twin daughters, if I recall correctly, were there at the time and his wife was someplacl don't know, she was working, I guess. Lin himself was in jail being interrogated for his involvement in the Kaohsiung incident and in the magazine Mei Li Tao and in the opposition movement. I say "interrogated" because that's a pleasant word for what was happening to him. While the wife was away, someone came in and murdered the mother and the twin daughters. There was another daughter that, if memory serves me correctly, was there but was not murdered.

There was, of course, a terrible stink in the press about this, especially when Lin was in jail for a political crime (Kaohsiung Incident), not a criminal action. The government said that they were going to investigate and find the culprit. The reports that we got were that the Lin's house was watched at all times by government police, and the idea that someone could have snuck in there unbeknownst to these policemen just seemed a little strange to most people. But the government came out with a likely criminal, somebody called Big Beard, (Ta Hu Tzu). Big Beard, it turns out, was an American, who on his own sort of befriended the Lin family, although one feels he was more of a pest than anything else. He was an American whose name I can't recall at this time, who was teaching, I believe, maybe a research or graduate student in an Australian university. So they arrested Big Beard, but didn't hold him because he had nothing to do with the murder obviously. It was good smoke to blow in the face of the public. Everybody was talking about Big Beard's nefarious deeds for a few days anyway. Apparently he did go to the house that day, but was gone long before the murders.

In any event, they had the trial and Chiang Ching-kuo promised that the trial would be fair and open. Before the trial they had an indictment of these eight people. The indictment was for sedition. They had an indictment and they had a trial, and the trial was open and I think probably more or less fair. It was reported in the press, in two papers anyway: Tzu Li Wan Pao and Chung Kuo Shis Pao. The way it was reported was that these two papers and some foreign correspondents, AP being one of them, would send two people to sit in at the trial and they would take turns recording what was said. And their transcriptions would be printed in the newspaper the next day.

Q: Sort of as a question and answer format?

DONNELLY: Well, I guess one did the questions, one did the answer, one did five minutes and the other did five minutes. One person couldn't get it all and the two of them would alternate in whatever way was comfortable for them.

Q: So this amounted to the only public transcript?

DONNELLY: The only public transcript, and it was in the paper and it was fairly full and fairly accurate. Such things as the intimidation of Annette Lu who is today's vice president and spent six plus years in jail for the Kaohsiung incident. She said that she was intimidated by them. She was interrogated only by men and they would say things to her like, "When you come here, you are as if you are naked," and she thought that was sexual intimidation. That was all printed in the paper. So the trial, I think, was pretty fair.

Lin Yi-hsiung would tell about being tortured with having salt water poured down him until he was bloated and all sorts of things like that. It was out in the paper, so the trial, I think, was fair and open. They had the indictment and then the trial and then the sentencing. The sentencing was based upon the indictment and not upon the trial. So, Chiang Ching-kuo was right, the trial was fair and open, but the indictment and the sentencing weren't fair; they were open, but not fair. So these people all spent time in jail and now, of course, they are all out and in leadership positions in Taiwan.

Q: Now if the press is publishing this account of the trial, I'm presuming that, it's now AIT, is translating these and sending this back to Washington?

DONNELLY: What was USIS became the Cultural and Information Section (CIS). We translated them, all of what was in the paper, and sent it back. We did that independent of the political section, which became the General Affairs Section. We sent it in on our own. Really it should've been a General Affairs Section responsibility, but seeing we had liaison with the press and the press has pretty much always been a USIS function, we sent it in on that basis. Everything that was in the paper was translated by us and sent in.

Yu Chi-chung, publisher of Chung Kuo Shih Pao (China Times) had the most complete coverage of it, and he announced that when the trial was all over, he was going to put all of the testimony that was recorded in his paper into a book and sell it. After he announced that, the government got to him and said, in so many words, "Don't you dare," and so he didn't.

Q: Well, it's interesting because Yu, of course, sits on the central committee of the Kuomintang. He is at the center of power; he's a trusted?

DONNELLY: Yes.

Q: Even with that, that's enough political protection to allow him to publish the trial, but not enough to protect a subsequent book?

DONNELLY: Apparently. He made the announcement and then he changed his mind. Why he changed his mind, only he knows. (laughs)

Q: Well, actually, we got ahead of our story a little bit because President Carter on December 13, 1979 announced that the United States was going to change diplomatic recognition and recognize the People's Republic of China and unrecognize the Republic of China on Taiwan. For those sitting in Taiwan at that time, working for the embassy and USIA, what was that announcement like to you?

DONNELLY: It was a shock, I think for everybody. There had been indications that we were going to do something like this. In September of that year, we were still in the embassy of course, and the country team, that is the heads of the sections, was called together to discuss how we would operate if this happened. Then we put all in of our ideas, I think it's fair to say that Mark Pratt was the guy who did the writing of the report, but I'm not sure now, anyway all the ideas were put together and sent to Washington as if Washington was at all interested in our opinion, which they weren't. (laughs)

Q: So this was very much a local initiative or appeared to be a local initiative?

DONNELLY: It seems to me that it might have been, yes. In any event, nothing happened after September; we were going along quite well. They were in the midst of an election. The election period was about two weeks, and a week before the election was over, Carter made this announcement. A lot of people were very upset about the timing because had he waited a week the election would've been over and the democratic forces were making great strides in that election. But when he made the announcement, Chiang Ching-kuo canceled the election.

It was quite a shock to the Chinese and to us. My recollection of that day that the announcement was made, that was, I guess, the 15th in Washington; the 16th in Taiwan. That morning a cable came in to the ambassador and probably only the ambassador and the political officers were aware of the contents of that message. But that message was something like, "Stand by for an important cable." It didn't say what.

That night, Ambassador Leonard Unger went to the American Chamber of Commerce Christmas party at the officer's club on Chung Shan North Road. He had on his tuxedo and a red bow tie, as I recall. Mark Pratt must've been in the office and a cable came in late at night, I'm not sure if it was 9:30 or 10:00 at night - something like that, saying that Carter was going to announce the Normalization of China and the derecognition of Taiwan. Mark immediately got a hold of Unger at the Christmas party at I think about 11:00 pm and then Unger started the wheels in motion to contact Chiang Ching-kuo who was the president of the country. Now you don't just go to the president of the country's house and ring the bell and talk to him, so it took a while to go through the several people that they had to and then they got Chiang Ching-kuo at, I think, slightly after two o'clock in the morning. Unger told him that we were derecognizing Taiwan. I'm told that he was in shock, shocked into inaction, and really didn't do anything until the following morning.

At six o'clock in the morning I was called by the duty officer and told to get down to the office. I got there, I guess about 8:00, and the country team was in the bubble.

Q: Now your position at this time was?

DONNELLY: I was the PAO (Public Affairs Officer). I was in charge of the cultural and information sections of USIS.

Q: So you were the senior USIA person?

DONNELLY: I was the senior USIA person and Mark and I had been in Taiwan the longest so we were the most, familiar with Taiwan.

Q: (laughs) The longest living organizers.

DONNELLY: We got there and Unger, still in his tuxedo and red bow tie, told us what Carter was going to do and we should call our families and tell them to listen to the radio, the armed forces radio station in Taiwan which would broadcast the message. And to tell our families to keep the kids home from school and things like that. So we did. Then the announcement came and of course people were very upset.

One of the first things that President Chiang Ching-kuo did was to cancel the election. He'd just been shocked into inaction because he wasn't expecting it.

Q: Talking about peoples reactions, you have employees in your office. Did they begin to react?

DONNELLY: Yes, sure. Our office had about half mainland Chinese and half Taiwanese Chinese. The majority, of course, felt betrayed and they felt very bad, but there was a minority of Taiwanese, maybe four or five, who thought it was a good idea. They thought it was a good idea because of the dislike of the Kuomintang government and they thought this may, somehow, give Taiwan a chance to become independent. So there were a few who thought it was a pretty good idea.

The election was cancelled and we got a few weeks of just sort of fumbling around. Of course there was a reaction in the United States, as well. The reaction was that not enough people were told; I don't think Barry Goldwater knew. Had Barry Goldwater known, he would've somehow thrown a monkey wrench into it if he could. He and most other conservative republicans were kept out of it. There was also a feeling that Carter was a little petty about it by announcing it at 9:00 at night Washington time during prime time which meant that as soon as he announced it, people like Goldwater wouldn't have any time to mobilize anything and it wouldn't give the people in Taiwan any time either. In any event, we were sort of fumbling around. It was decided in Washington that it would probably be a decent thing to do to send a delegation to Taiwan to smooth ruffled feathers.

Q: Give out some face?

DONNELLY: Yes, face. So, Warren Christopher led a delegation with Roger Sullivan and a lot of other people that, I'm not sure if I've got my dates remembered,

Q: I think it's the last week or so?

DONNELLY: It's after Christmas.

Q: It's after Christmas, but not January 1st.

DONNELLY: They arrived?

Q: Actually it's 29th, 30th?

DONNELLY: Something like that.

They arrived at the airport. I was the head of USIS, but I was also handling all of the press relations. Before they came, someone in the government information office talked to me. I went over and they wanted to know if Christopher would give a press conference. I said, "Yes, I was told he'd give a press conference at the airport," and he asked me who was going to introduce him. I said, "Well, I usually introduce them; that's my job. I'll introduce him." He said, "As a courtesy, would you let Chen Fu," (that's Frederick Chen) "introduce him?" I said, "That's a little unusual. I'll ask Ambassador Unger." At this point, when we were trying to bend over backwards to smooth their feathers, Ambassador Unger agreed.

Q: Chen Fu is the minister of foreign affairs at this time, isn't he? Or is he head of GIO?

DONNELLY: At this time, he had already left GIO (Government Information Office). In any event, Ambassador Unger said okay, so I wrote out the statement for Christopher. As I said, they agreed for Fred Chen, who was not the GIO at this time - he was the vice foreign minister, to introduce him. So, Fred Chen introduced him. We got into the airport and as we were going into the airport, we noticed that a lot of students were milling around. Now that airport at that time had a military side and a civilian side, but the same runway of course. The military terminal was, of course, secure. So we went to the gates and outside the gates were all these students milling around. We went in, let me back up just a bit. We were told before, that we probably should use Chinese government cars instead of our own cars in the motorcade. We thought this strange, but who's ever in charge of automobiles said okay. So in the motorcade were, I suppose, thirty cars or so; half the Chinese delegation, half the American, and they lined up outside. Christopher came with a delegation, Roger Sullivan and other people, and he was led into where the press were. A very small room, but there were about forty or fifty press.

Q: Now this is on the military side?

DONNELLY: It was on the military side. There's nobody in there except the press and the delegation.

Q: But he's arrived in his own aircraft?

DONNELLY: Oh, yes, the American aircraft. Sure. It was a U.S. Air Force plane, I believe. In any event, he arrives and I would've introduced him if everybody agreed and I would've said, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is Warren Christopher, the deputy secretary of state. He would be happy to take your questions." That's all...

Fred Chen's introduction was not "Ladies and gentlemen of the press, this is the deputy secretary of state. He has a short statement and then he'll take your questions." It was nothing like that at all. It was a condemnation of the act of Normalization, and the Taiwan government negotiating position on Normalization, from which they would not retreat. We were talking about people to people relations and they wanted government to government relations, and they would not budge from that. The introduction was very hard-line, very long. It went on for about five minutes, after which, Warren Christopher read this very bland statement that I read. Should I read it?

Q: Yes.

DONNELLY: This is the statement of Warren Christopher after he'd just been blasted by vice foreign minister Fred Chen, and told what they're going to say to us, and that they're not going to retreat from it. He said, "President Carter had asked me to come here to initiate discussions with President Chiang and other senior officials of your government. In these discussions, my purpose will be to seek to develop a general framework for our future relationship. We will be discussing arrangements which can enable our two peoples to maintain our cultural, commercial, and other relationships on an unofficial basis. We are here to begin an important process and I hope we can make a good start. I am grateful to President Chiang and his colleagues for setting aside time for these discussions. I look forward to meetings which will reflect the goodwill and understanding that has existed between us."

(laughs) Obviously there wasn't any goodwill or understanding.

Q: Now let me get this straight. They have created a transportation system in which their drivers control the cars; we're not using our cars and we're not using our drivers?

DONNELLY: A few of our cars and a few of our drivers.

Q: But the delegation itself?

DONNELLY: I was in a Chinese government car.

Q: But the importance of the press conference is that they've made their negotiating position public so that's it's going to be difficult?I mean, in the world of negotiation, if the other guy makes his a good public hard-line comment, his defense then in the private meetings are, you know, "My public is going to expect this and I can't back down any further." So this is all part of their negotiating tactic.

DONNELLY: It's part of their negotiating tactics, but it wasn't a good idea, as will be seen.

In any event, we went out then and got in the motorcade and started out. By the time that we got outside the gates, the students, I don't know how many there were, several thousand, surrounded the cars and began to pelt them with eggs and rocks and to jump up on top of the cars and stamp on the roofs. I had with me in the car Mort Smith who was one of our USIA people from Washington. I was sitting in the front seat and Mort and another, Jack Cannon, were in the back. A student came with a flag pole and shoved it through the window and broke the window. I was covered with glass and cut a little bit. Ambassador Unger was driving with one of the admirals, I think. He was mildly cut and his glasses were knocked off. He had the Seventh Fleet commander with him, I think.

Q: Let's see, Admiral Weisner, was CINC...

DONNELLY: Yes, that's what he was: CINCPAC, Admiral Maurice Weisner.

Q: Were they in the ambassador's car with the ambassador's driver, or were they in?

DONNELLY: I forget; I just don't remember now.

Our car was badly damaged. They kept us for a long, long time in that motorcade; wouldn't let us go through. Just pounded the cars and breaking the windows. No one was hurt badly and I'm told by a young friend of mine who was a military officer - a young Chinese friend - that the soldiers were told to don civilian clothes and make sure that none of the students got too wild. He said, he himself, wrestled down a student who was going after the ambassador's car with a hammer. So they were prepared. The demonstration was supposed to be spontaneous, but when we came to the gate that night I noticed that there was a large truck and on the side of the truck was written in Chinese, "Lu Tung Tzu Shuo" which means "mobile toilet," and you very seldom have mobile toilets at spontaneous demonstrations.

Also, I know from a friend of mine who was a student at National Taiwan University, that there were loud speaker announcements that morning at that university and others, urging students to go and rally at the airport. So it was a put up job.

We finally broke out of the cordon that the students had created, but had to abandon our car because it was so badly damaged. When the cars broke out, they sort of went in all different directions. Some went to the Grand Hotel and our car went up to Yang Ming Shan, up to Kuomintang resort up there. I forget the name of it. There were three or four cars that went off in one direction and Roger Sullivan was in one of them. Then other cars just went to places like U.S. Military Headquarters.

Q: What do you mean you abandoned the car?

DONNELLY: We abandoned our car and found another car that we could take. Our car wouldn't work because it was so badly damaged.

Q: Now was your car a U.S. government car or one that they provided?

DONNELLY: It was a Chinese government car. It seems that they thought they didn't want to damage our cars and have to pay for them. (laughs) I don't know. In any event, we abandoned it and we got one of our own cars. I forget how we got it, but we got in one of our own cars and I think first we went to the U.S. Army Headquarters and then got on the phone there with Washington; I didn't, but Roger Sullivan did. Some of the people were asking what we should do. I think on the other end was Holbrooke, but I don't remember. I do remember that there were a couple in the U.S. delegation that wanted to turn right around, get back on those planes and fly out of there. The reason they didn't is because there's a U.S. Air Force regulation, I'm told, that a pilot has to have so many hours sleep after so many hours in the air.

Q: So they didn't have another crew?

DONNELLY: I don't know. So it was decided that they would stay there and tough this thing out and give face, anyway, and they did. During the three days they were there, there were some mild demonstrations. I'm forgetting, but before they came we did have demonstrations at the embassy. I was there at the embassy. The embassy was sort of surrounded by these yelling and screaming students, and rocks were being thrown at windows. Some windows broke. The embassy was really a good thirty yards from the street and there was a fence there, so somebody with a very good arm got one or two rocks through the window.

Q: My impression is that the embassy is on a fairly narrow street, too. It's not on a main boulevard; it's sort of off a main boulevard and the streets around it are just two lane roads.

DONNELLY: No, that's the present AIT.

Q: Oh.

DONNELLY: The embassy was, near the old North Gate and the railroad station. It's on the corner of a fairly large street. As a matter of fact, there's an overpass right there. That was one thing that worried our security people, because the overpass is close enough that you could do damage to the embassy from the overpass. In any event, that passed and then?

Q: Now did you participate in any of these discussions?

DONNELLY: Not in the discussions, no.

Q: But you would've had to handle the press, the American press that came with the delegation certainly realized that this was going to be a news event so they got themselves there.

DONNELLY: There were a couple of dates; the dates of December 15th where Carter announced the derecognition, January 1st when derecognition took place, and February 28th when American official activity in Taiwan would end. In other words, there was a two month period under the Vienna Convention where somebody who is winding down an embassy has a grace period of selling property and acting sort of official for two months.

We derecognized formally on January 1st, but December 31st, the flag came down for the last time and that was obviously a news event. Ambassador Unger wanted the flag to come down with dignity and had a private, sort of family affair. I argued that that was a mistake. I argued that the U.S. press and the U.S. people would want to see this and it should not be kept from the press. He overruled me, of course. So that day, I went down to the embassy and told the ambassador, "Make sure, if you don't want anybody in here, that that gate is shut."

They were going to take the flag down, I think at sundown, if I recall. What Unger wanted is he was going to stand there at the foot of the flag, have the Marines take down the flag, fold it in military manner and give it to him in a very dignified way. That was going to be alright, but a very enterprising American reporter, I think his name was Collins - his father was a former ambassador or consular general to Vietnam back in the '50s, I believe, he got a hold of a Chinese government car somehow and came to the gate and tooted the horn and the embassy gate guard, a Chinese, opened the gate and let him in. Now we've got, I think he was one of the news networks, CBS (Central Broadcast System) maybe, an American newsman inside the gate. Well, Unger was livid and the security officer was running around screaming, especially at me. I said, "I didn't open the gate." They said, "You've got to get him out of here," and I said, "What do you want me to do, throw him out? He's bigger than I am." They said, "Tell him to leave," and Unger at this point, he's going to call the head of NBC or CBS, whatever it was, and I said, "You're going to get no place. It's the middle of the night, and if you tell him, 'one of your reporters was enterprising enough to get in here', he'll probably get a raise." So Unger finally cooled down, but he was mad as hell. They said, "Get him out of here," and I said, "I'll tell you what, I will go down and ask him to leave." That's ridiculous, but I said I'd do it.

Q: Where has he parked himself all this time?

DONNELLY: The car is now inside the gate. There's a wall around the compound?

Q: And he's just stayed with his car?

DONNELLY: Yes, he said he's going to cover this event.

So, I said, "I'll go down," and I went down and I knew him. I forget his first name, John or something like that. I said, "What if I asked you to leave?" (laughs) He said he'd tell me to go to hell. I said, "Okay, I asked you and that's your answer." So Unger then decided that he would have the flag taken down, folded, and brought into him and presented to him inside the embassy. I said, "Well you know, they're going to get pictures anyway. There's this overpass right by and there are apartment buildings all around and the newsmen and all around. Just let them in," but of course he wouldn't do it.

I have some pictures?

Q: The whole incident with the flag taking down, of course is symbolic of the events that have unfolded, so this is a great journalistic coup for this young man. We've just looked at your photos here and I see the overpass you're talking about; it looks like it's only about fifteen feet away.

DONNELLY: It wasn't that close, but it's close. There were reporters up there and all over the place. Well, the flag is down and now we formally recognize China, but we're still in Taiwan for two months at which point someone from the State Department comes out and a man who later became ambassador to South Africa, his name will come to me in a minute, to tell us what our future is going to be. Now we had all these ideas that if we became non-State and civilians, we'd all get civilian pay and all of this sort of stuff. (laughs)

Q: Sounds like an excuse for a pay raise there.

DONNELLY: His message was, you're going to be separated from, but then can come back into the U.S. government when you finish your tour here, and your time here will count towards retirement and everything else. There'll be no change in pay. The possibility of you maybe losing a year or so towards any promotion would be great because this will not be a very important post. In addition to that, you lose your diplomatic immunity, so in a traffic accident or anything like that, you won't have the power of the embassy behind you. This is a very discouraging message.

Q: You'd be quite exposed to local legislation. Now was this someone from the administrative side of State Department personnel or one from the desk; political, policy?

DONNELLY: No, this was an important person who later, as I told you, was ambassador.

Q: He's grabbing you out of the personnel system.

DONNELLY: And his name is personnel administer, because I've seen him since.

Q: Because now, the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), which is the law that puts all this in place, has not been passed yet. This is State's version of that law, and so he's explaining to you what State has written into the TRA that they're sending up to congress.

DONNELLY: I don't know whether exactly he's talking about what State is sending to congress, but he's talking about how State is going to view us and he said, "Anyone that wants to leave, we will reassign them right now. Anybody that wants to stay, this is the deal."

Well, about half the people, I think, decided that they wanted out. I stayed.

Q: Actually, in addition to those, State had already planned to reduce the size of the mission to some extent.

DONNELLY: I think they had a cap on it, and I think the cap was something like sixty or sixty-one.

Q: Yes.

DONNELLY: And I think the cap has since been lifted, maybe, and now there's a few more. But of course the military is out.

Q: Right.

DONNELLY: And a few military who remained, remained in civilian status; no uniforms or anything like that. But the Taiwanese, of course, wanted some military because they wanted to buy weapons from the United States.

Q: One of the things I wanted to get clear was you were saying about fifty percent of the people didn't take up the offer to stay, but in fact, wasn't that cap smaller than the number of people that were there? So somebody had to leave anyway.

DONNELLY: Yes, and I don't know what the numbers are.

Q: Okay.

DONNELLY: So that was that, and then February 28th was the last day when we?

Q: Could act as an official?

DONNELLY: Yes, had any official capacity whatsoever. Then what happened was State sent their version of the Taiwan Relations Act to Congress and Congress didn't like it. Congress decided that they were going to write their own. Well, Congress doesn't move very quickly and it took until May. In the meantime, Senator Ernest Hollings decided to punish the State Department for being so naughty and doing things without informing congress: he held up our pay. There could be no money spent on anything in Taiwan while we were there; no visas could be issued, nothing could be done. No official Americans could come and we could not go to our offices. We were all put on administrative leave. Administrative leave means you don't have anything to do, but you get your pay. But the fact is, they couldn't pay us because he held everything up. So there's a whole group of us that are now on administrative leave and the country team met every morning, and Bill Brown's house who was the deputy, we didn't have any ambassador?

Q: Right, because Ambassador Unger has left.

DONNELLY: Ambassador Unger has left and Bill Brown is holding in his house every morning, a session where we get together and talk and communicate with Washington by phone (we don't have any cables) about one thing and the other. We did that every morning; the country team did. The rest of the staff just didn't do anything. They were there, but we're not getting paid. People's checks are bouncing and people's house payments on their houses back in the States aren't being paid. It was a mess. People who wanted to go to the States for good reasons, businessmen and whatnot, couldn't get a visa. The only way they could get a visa, and they worked this out, was for them to give all the information to Hong Kong and the visa would be issued in Hong Kong and sent back. So it was.

Q: Adding time and delay to the Taiwan businessman's... That would be the individual needing a visa.

DONNELLY: Yes, so there was a lot of important business that didn't get done for three months, thanks to Hollings' pique at the State Department.

Q: What's a senator for, but to punish...

DONNELLY: (laughs) Finally, we opened sometime in early May and it was decided that we would call USIS the Cultural and Information Section at that time. It was decided to start our activities on a rather low key. Now one thing we'd always had was lectures for visiting Americans and the first person who wanted to come was Susan Sontag. She had been to China and she wanted to see the other side of China. She wanted to compare them. The State Department was sending her on a lecture tour to Asia, but not Taiwan; she was going to Korea and some other places. But she said, "I want to go to Taiwan," so they said, "Do you want her?" and we said, "Yes."

We decided to start the lecture program not at night when we'd get a lot of people, but in the afternoon, hoping that we'd get started and then we could work into the evening hours. So Susan Sontag came and she was there a couple days. I had her over to dinner, I know, and then the day of the lecture I took her to lunch in Wan Hwa, which is an old section of Taipei. I took her to the Lung Shan Temple, one of Taiwan's biggest temples, and then to a little food stall. Right across from the temple there's a little market area with food stalls in it. I remember we had fried squid and she thoroughly enjoyed herself. And then walked from Wan Hwa back a bit before we got in the car and in Wan Hwa, there is an alley where they sell snake.

Q: Snake Alley?

DONNELLY: She was interested in that, and at the next street to Snake Alley, as we passed by, she noticed there were very young girls standing in front of little houses and they seemed to have a lot of makeup on and short skirts and stuff. She asked me about it. I said, "Well, a lot of them are young girls and their father - a lot of them are adopted - and this is a fact, it's not a nice fact, but it's a fact; they'll be sold and rented out to the bordellos for a period of a couple years and then her father would get $500 or something." So it's not much different than a lot of other societies. It probably doesn't happen anymore, but it did happen.

That was that, and then we got back to the lecture. In the lecture there were about half Chinese, half American. We didn't get many Americans at our lectures, but if you had Susan Sontag, all the American language students would want to come and listen to her. USIA in Washington sent out a biography of her and we printed it up and I put copies of it on the table in the auditorium. I went in to introduce her and people were sitting in the auditorium, I went up to the stage, I thought she was following me, but she wasn't; she picked up the flier with her biography on it, and as I'm waiting for her, she walks up, she's reading it as she's walking, and then she sits on the stage, reading, and I give the standard bland introduction about her, "Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Susan Sontag to Taiwan." Clap, clap, clap. Nothing. She's still reading; she's ignoring the audience completely, reading this thing that we had sent out from Washington. I didn't notice that I'd walked to the back of the auditorium by that time, then I look up and she's reading and people are waiting, and she finishes reading and she says, "Neal, who wrote this?" I said, "We got it from Washington." She said, "It's all lies." (laughs) And that was the start. Then what she did, she read from one of her books and took questions. The first question was from a dignified older Chinese man who asked the sort of question that they always ask. He said, "Is this your first visit to Taiwan?" (in an elderly voice) She said, "Yes, it is." "What is the thing that impressed you most about Taiwan?" She said, "That you still practice slavery!" (laughs) Oh, God, the whole place erupted. She was talking about the little girls in the bordellos, and she went on to explain how I had taken her down there. It was a disaster.

Q: But actually, by way of background, this is a standard USIA program where they get famous Americans in the arts and they offer these people to the regional bureaus. "We're going to send Susan to Korea and Japan and whatnot. Do you guys want her?" and the post will come in and say, "Ooh, this individual is very attractive to our audience and we would love to put them up."

DONNELLY: A lot of Americans like to do this, too; people like Daniel Boorstein. He came iyou know, a very prestigious man. And others like Thoreau who wrote The Great Railway Bazaar, and some other things. I know he's got a brother. Is his name Paul Thoreau?

Q: Yes, that's the travel guide.

DONNELLY: Paul Thoreau wrote that book after a USIS sponsored tour. He said he wanted to go to all these places and lecture as an author. And he did; he went from one place to the other and then he wrote about them and you had no idea from reading the book, that what he was on a USIS sponsored tour until he got to Vietnam. In Vietnam he stayed with the PAO who was Marshall Brement. You may know him.

Q: Yes.

DONNELLY: Marshall Brement was the PAO. He was a State officer, but he took a tour as PAO in Vietnam. I don't know if you knew that.

Q: I had forgotten that he did a tour there.

DONNELLY: He stayed with Marshall Brement, then he went to Hue, and in Hue he stayed with the local USIS guy who later was in VOA with me; a very, very nice guy. I forget his name. He's the only one in the whole book that he mentions by name, I think. And identifies as a USIS officer. But anyway, that's a speaker's program, which can be very good.

Q: My impression is that it's good in a number of ways. I was intrigued that Maya Angelou went on one of these USIA things as a cast member of Porgy and Bess during the 1950s when she was a young woman.

DONNELLY: We've had a lot of famous musicians. Duke Ellington came and Louis Armstrong.

Q: To Taiwan?

DONNELLY: I'm sorry, Louis Armstrong came to Hong Kong while I was there, we had Duke Ellington in Taiwan. Oh just lots and lots of very famous people. Charlie Byrd came to Taiwan too.

Q: So this is a major program that USIA has to expose American arts to a foreign audience?

DONNELLY: And expose American artists to the world. So it's a very good program.

Q: Well, here you are, it's the first days of AIT, you're not getting paid, there's no law that covers you, you literally can't talk to your colleagues officially. I wonder who pays for the telephone calls back to Washington. (laughs)

DONNELLY: I don't know much about the administrative aspect of it, but it was a crazy time.

Q: But now things get straightened out by May?

DONNELLY: May, yes.

Q: And who comes out to be the head of AIT?

DONNELLY: Chuck Cross. Chuck Cross was ambassador to Singapore and he's a guy that was born in China of missionary parents and was a China hand-type, and he's the new director. We called him director.

Q: Of AIT. Actually, Chuck has just published a book of his memoirs, Born a Foreigner. He talks about being of missionary parents in China and a Japanese language officer with Marines during the war.

To get this job, has he resigned the Foreign Service or is he actually retired? I've forgotten.

DONNELLY: Well, all of it. It was all a fiction and I don't know what his fiction was; whether he retired or not. He may have retired, but I'm sure they would've taken him back had he wanted to. But I think that was his last post.

I guess I went on home leave in July or something and I think he came when I was on home leave, but for some reason he left. I came back in September, I think, and he left shortly after I came back and Bill Brown had already left. Bill Brown became ambassador to Israel later, whether he left to do that or not, I don't know. I think he did. So there was no deputy when I got back from home leave, and I think it must've been September, and Chuck Cross then went on home leave, I believe. I believe he came directly from Singapore to Taiwan and had not been on home leave, so when I got back, he went directly on home leave and I was made acting director of AIT. A friend of mine quipped that the highest rank I got was acting director of an unofficial entity. (laughs) In any event, I was acting director and Chuck Cross left me specific instructions, "Make sure that no think piece goes out of this AIT while you're in charge. I don't want any waves while I'm gone." So, sort of make sure nothing happens. And I did that. I had a fight with Mark Pratt once because he wanted to send out something that looked to me like a think piece. We're the best of friends, but we did have a little to-do over that. So anyway, here we get to October 10th, which is the Chinese National Day.

Q: The Republic of China National Day, right.

DONNELLY: And I'm the acting director, so I cable Washington and say, "What should I do? Should I go to the event?" and word came back that "Yes, you should go to the event." Now at the National Day they have a tea party for diplomatic invitees in the presidential building just before the event, and then from the tea party you go out to the stands in front of the presidential building and watch the parade. So, I'm invited now to the tea party and I go in and they were just having tea and somebody gives me a number, something like eighty-two or eighty-three, and I don't know what it's for, but I've got this number. And then after about a half an hour of tea, we're told that we're going to go and shake Chiang Ching-kuo's hand, and to line up by numbers. Well, I keep looking for what number it is and I find that my wife and I are the very last people in the line. (laughs)

The first group in the line are official diplomats. The doyenne of the diplomatic corps was the South African ambassador and then all the Central Americans and the second group in the line were invited guests like businessmen from America and Britain and France and Japan, and then the third group were unofficial diplomats and they'd be the Japanese and the Singaporean. We were the last ones. So I got to shake Chiang Ching-kuo's hand last. It was a real cold fish handshake.

Q: Well, actually that's interesting because when I was there in the '83, '85 period, they were trying all kinds of gimmicks to create the impression that it was a more official than unofficial relationship. They could have put you in the front of the line and then you would have been sorely tested.

DONNELLY: Well, dare I tell a joke on this tape?

Q: Oh, please.

DONNELLY: This joke was told to me by a Chinese reporter, a lady reporter actually, during the Christopher mission time, because Fred Chen insisted that we have a government to government relationship. Have you heard this?

Q: Yes.

DONNELLY: Should I tell that or not?

Q: Oh, yes, yes. Tell it.

DONNELLY: A government to government relationship and we wanted a people to people relationship. The joke is, it has to be told in Chinese, that Fred Chen's or somebody's driver was driving an American and a Chinese official around and they kept arguing in English about people to people or government to government, and the Chinese driver didn't speak any English, so at the end of the day he asked his boss (of course this is in Chinese), he said, "I don't understand. You two talked all day long about 'P'i Ku Tu P'i Ku' (people to people) and 'Kan Men Tui Kan Men' (government to government) what's the difference?" Of course, P'i Ku means ass and Kan Men means rectum. It was a joke that made the rounds during derecognition. So it shows that the Chinese have a good sense of humor. We AITers had our own sense of humor. Three of us couples got together and composed the AIT fight songs. I'll give you a copy if you want.

Q: So you were acting director for how long? A couple of months there?

DONNELLY: A couple of months, yes. You might say "nonaction acting director".

Q: On a short leash, by the way. (laughs)

DONNELLY: Yes, on a short leash.

Q: How would you characterize the impact of the Normalization procedure on USIA's program in Taiwan?

DONNELLY: Well, the first test concerned one thing USIS does as a matter of course: it puts out backgrounders to influential people, newsmen, and government officials of U.S. government announcements; for example, a presidential press conference. We'll record it and put it on in mimeographed or other form (mimeographed in the old days) and?

Q: It's the wireless file.

DONNELLY: The wireless file. And maybe a presidential speech or even an act of congress or something very official, and send it around. After we opened up shop again and started sending backgrounders, I was called over to the Government Information Office. Carter gave a speech in which he said something about the People's Republic of China. Now, in Taiwan you cannot say People's Republic of China; you either call them Chinese communists or bandit communists. You can call them bandit communists or Chinese communists, but you can't call them the People's Republic of China and I was told that I couldn't send this out; I'd have to correct it. Of course now I'm not official. I said, "I'm not going to correct my president's language. You know, I'm not going to do it. You can do what you want, but I'm not going to do it. You can throw me off the island; whatever you want." They backed down, but they thought they could intimidate the U.S. government. So we felt that. Other than that, the Taiwan government realized pretty soon that their best course was to get along with us rather than to frustrate us.

Q: So all your programs are intact, you're getting speakers from USIA. How about the magazines and whatnot that you're distributing; is there any problem?

DONNELLY: There really wasn't any great problem.

Q: So, change the name on the door and the programs move forward?

DONNELLY: Right, and I think most of the people in the government wanted to get out of that and there were only a few hard-liners. We were still invited to receptions and it just went on.

Q: How about your personal contacts? I mean you're the senior USIA person; are some people sort of dropping you off their 'A' list or are the Taiwanese coming forward and making comments?

DONNELLY: I can't think of any incident where they went one way or the other.

Q: Is there anything else we need to cover for this period? Actually, we started out that you were the head of the cultural section and we haven't paid much attention to your own jobs during this timeframe. You were head of the cultural section, deputy PAO, then the PAO, the Public Affairs Officers, then you got to run the shop for two months. So at what time did you move from being the cultural officer to the deputy PAO?

DONNELLY: I was asked back to Taiwan by the PAO; Bob Clarke who had been my PAO when I left in '72. He wanted me to come back and I said okay. I went back in the same shop; the cultural shop. When Bob left, Bill Ayers came. Bob's deputy was a man by the name of Harry Britton and then Bill Ayers who was another China type who had been born in China of missionary parents, he came as the PAO and Britton left shortly after that. Bill made me deputy, so I was Bill's deputy for a couple years and then when Bill left, I was made PAO.

Q: How formal was your definition of responsibility?

DONNELLY: In USIA, the standard USIA operation would have a PAO, a Public Affairs Officer, a DPAO (Deputy Public Affairs Officer) or a cultural officer, an information officer. Under the cultural officer you might have a publications officer or assistant cultural officer. Under the information officer you might have a press officer, in some places a radio officer and in some places a motion picture officer. That's the way a normal USIS operation was run. Unfortunately there were very few normal USIS operations. The duties sometimes don't always fit the title.

What a deputy should do is take the direction of the PAO and make things work. He probably might have to write the country plan, he would have to do sort of all administering of the program. In Taiwan it ended up that I did all of that plus I pretty much handled the press because all my life I've been dealing with press. We had a couple of press flaps and the PAO at that time, Bill Ayers, asked me to take over all of the press duties as well as being Deputy PAO.

Q: Was there a fairly established press presence in Taiwan?

DONNELLY: There were of course local papers; a lot of local papers. Some more important than others, obviously. In terms of foreign correspondents, you had AP (Associated Press), UPI (United Press International), Reuters, Agence France Press, and a few other foreign news agencies, but not all of these people were represented by Americans. They usually were local Chinese who would do the reporting for you. So we were in touch with all of these people. Then there were several freelance reporters. TIME magazine had a man who was on a retainer, and Newsweek as well. And then there were just other people that wrote for whoever would take their stuff.

Q: You were saying there were some press flaps?

DONNELLY: Well, yes, there always are of course. One of the big ones was when Richard Holbrooke came; I forget just when this was. It must've been before normalization. In any event, he came out and when he came into the airport of course the reporters wanted to talk to him. So they crowded around him and pushed tape recorders in his face and knocked his glasses off. Richard Holbrooke is not the kind of guy you want to knock the glasses off of. He said at that time, I quote, "You'll pay for this!" He was really upset with the USIS officer who was doing the press at that time who didn't organize the thing in such a way that that wouldn't happen. He raised hell over that. So that's when I was the deputy and that's when Bill Ayers asked me to take over the press responsibility as well.

The next time Richard Holbrooke came, several months or a year later, I forget when, he landed at the airport and there was a government car to pick him up that speeded to, I think the ambassador's house, through empty streets. It was like the Pope coming; they cleared the way. So there was no problem, but he got deference more than he deserved.

Q: One of the things; Taiwan is a bit of a focus because of the Kaohsiung incident and the emphasis on human rights, but the Chen Wan-cheng affair happened just before you left. That was the young Mellon University?

DONNELLY: Yes. Chen Wan-cheng was a professor at Carnegie Mellon. He came to Taiwan to see his parents at Christmas, I think, and he was found dead on the grounds of Taipei University. In college he had been a vocal advocate of Taiwan independence, as most Taiwanese are. The government picked him up for questioning at his apartment in Taipei and he never came back. That's when they found him on the grounds of Taiwan National University. The police said that they brought him home and don't know what happened to him.

Most people think that they interrogated him (this cannot be verified) and beat him pretty badly and he died and they dumped him there. They allowed the body to be viewed by some people from Carnegie Mellon who flew out to look at it. I have seen pictures of his nude body and it was pretty badly beaten. One of the reporters of, I think, the small paper Ta Hwa Wan Pao, a lady reporter, reported that the doctors or whomever they were from Carnegie Mellon came out and did an autopsy. The government got very upset with her use of the word "autopsy." Autopsy is very specific. They said they looked at the body, but they didn't do an autopsy. She was railroaded out of that country; I think she was sent by one of the news agencies to India to get her out of the country. That may not have been necessary, but that was what happened.

In any event, the government claimed that he must've gone up to the roof of, I think it was the library at Taiwan National University, and jumped; committed suicide. Someone said, if he jumped and committed suicide, why were there no head injuries? Because if you fall, the heaviest part of your body is your head. You're bound to have head injuries. He had no head injuries; his injuries were all on his body. The briefing officer for the garrison command or the police or whoever gave it - and this was recorded in the paper and caused a lot of laughs - said, "The reason he had no head injuries is because he fell on his "peigu," now his "peigu" is his bottom. The idea of committing suicide and somehow arranging to fall on your rear-end is ludicrous. So most people think he was done in by the government. No proof, of course.

Q: Besides the Mellon people that came, did that draw any extra press attention?

DONNELLY: Oh, sure, sure, a lot of press attention.

Q: So here again, suddenly you're handling the press.

DONNELLY: Well, I'm handling the press, but the story is theirs and I can't get up and give a press conference and say what I believe. I just facilitate whatever; if the reporters come and say they want to talk to a political officer or something, that's one of the things a press officer does. A press officer will set up interviews with embassy people.

Another duty of the press officer, depending upon the embassy and depending upon the ambassador, is to be the press spokesman. In Taiwan they wanted me to be the press spokesman because they didn't want newsmen going to each individual officer and picking their brains and tricking them into saying things. So anybody that wanted to see a political officer or an economic officer, any American newsman or any newsman would come to me and make an appointment and I'd make that appointment and the people would be prepared. If there was any embassy statement to be made, the ambassador would have me make the statement. Now the statement might be written by somebody else, but I would make it. That's the way they control the output to the press and eliminate flaps.

Q: Now you're the PAO before the break in relations and so after. How would you compare Ambassador Unger with Chuck Cross as managers... or were their jobs so different?

DONNELLY: I don't think their jobs are so different; Chuck Cross' job may have actually been a little more difficult, but Unger had a difficult job because he sort of knew that things were winding down and he had to almost prevent a flap. I don't believe he did, but if you know that your country is going to derecognize the country where you're accredited to, it must put a great deal of psychological pressure on you and everything you say and everything you do. So Unger had a tough job. Unger was a little stuffy, I think. He'd been an ambassador several times and I think?

Q: I think he was my ambassador in Bangkok, but he wasn't a China officer if I recall.

DONNELLY: Oh, no, he didn't speak Chinese. Is that harsh to call him a little stuffy?

Q: No.

DONNELLY: I would call Ambassador Unger "Mr. Ambassador" or something like that. Chuck Cross, I called Chuck. I was closer to him. Actually we played golf every Saturday morning and he and I were partners. We played two others, Bob Clark who was the former PAO and had retired in Taiwan, and a guy by the name of Larry something or other who was former Clif there's such a thing as "former" CIA, I don't know. Anyway, he was there as a civilian. My relations with Cross were different. Cross is sort of a feisty kind of a guy, but you know, a nice guy.

Q: Did you have any formal relationships with the other missions in town; the Japanese?

DONNELLY: No, I didn't with any of them. When I was in Kaohsiung, of course, the only other diplomatic mission in Kaohsiung was the Japanese consul there and we saw each other a lot, but that's because I was the only American in Kaohsiung. In Taipei, no, I didn't.

I had a lot of contact with foreign scholars, mainly because of my interest in Chinese temples and Chinese religion. So I got to know a lot of Germans who did research in that area.

Q: Why would the Germans be researching?

DONNELLY: I think I mentioned before about this Dutch scholar in Tainan, Rick Schipper. Did I mention him?

Q: No, I don't think so.

DONNELLY: Well, he was a Dutch scholar who came to Taiwan to do research in Chinese religion and then actually became a Taoist priest.

Q: Oh, yes. Yes, you did mention that.

DONNELLY: So he's one and then a lot of other Europeans are very interested in some of the culture of any country and some of them are interested in Chinese culture. The best place to do research in those days on Chinese culture was Taiwan, for two reasons; one, you couldn't do it in China, and two, the Chinese had repressed the popular religion, which is what these scholars were interested in. Of course popular religion in China now has come back in a big way, but in those days, no. So sort of a repository of popular religious culture would be Taiwan. There were 8,000 temples. There were Buddhists, Taoists, ConfuciuConfucianism is not exactly a religion, but like a religion. And there was what you might call folk religion and a lot of other things. And there was a lot of material there. I was very interested in that and collected a great deal of Chinese religious artifacts. I collected two very old scrolls of hell which were hung by a Taoist priest. Have you seen them?

Q: Yes, I have; they're very explicit as to what hell looks like.

DONNELLY: I have a collection of over two hundred wooden temple statues. I collected two of these sets of scrolls. One is according to an academic who studies these, over two hundred years old, which makes it probably one of the oldest in the world because these were not art; they were not considered art. There was no reason to save them; they were visual aids at funerals. On them you have the tortures for hell and then you have the caption alongside the torture telling you what it's for.

Q: Oh, if you do this, this is your punishment?

DONNELLY: So it seemed to me that this was a very interesting thing and it told what was naughty and nice at least in one area. The scrolls are fairly similar, one to the other, but as they're copied mistakes are made and then the mistakes are?In any event, I gave mine to the Smithsonian and they had an exhibit here in Washington for six months and then they sent it to several cities in America including Honolulu, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. In addition to that, I took all of the captions, there were five hundred captions in all, and translated them and then wrote a book about them. That accompanied the exhibit.

Q: It sounds like an assignment in Taiwan then offers a number of intellectually satisfying?

DONNELLY: I'm not sure what it did for my career, but I certainly enjoyed every minute of it.

Q: Being the PAO, you would have had an opportunity to interact fairly frequently with two major newspaper guys, Wang T'i-wu...

DONNELLY: Wang T'i-wu and Yu Chi-chung.

Q: Yu Chi-chung. What are their careers? How did they become heads of these two newspapers?

DONNELLY: Well, I'm pretty sure Wang T'i-wu was a military man and Yu Chi-chung was something of a scholar, certainly a political type. The papers started very modestly when the Taiwanese came to Taiwan in the late '40s. I guess probably by dint of their political connections with the government they grew until now or at least when I left, each one claimed a million in circulation and maybe more. I don't know.

Wang T'i-wu was sort of a hardnosed anti-communist and sort of built like a Jesse Ventura with hair. Yu Chi-chung has a gentler look to him; he is more scholarly-looking, and I think a more balanced type. I think he's a decent man.

Q: And the third paper on the island was Tzu Li Wan Pao?

DONNELLY: Tzu Li Wan Pao was not the third largest by any means. Tzu Li Wan Pao was more independent in its outlook, but again it had to be very careful; it could only go so far. The rest of the papers were more or less political or non-political. There was a paper for the China youth and there was even a paper for students which would print in Chinese and alongside the Chinese would have the National Phonetic alphabet for the students. If they didn't know the word, they could pronounce it.

Q: One of the things that was unique about the Taipei printing situation was these magazines that particularly the political opposition would use to get their message out because they couldn't control a newspaper. If I understand, there were newsprint rules and the Kuomintang control mechanism was such that you couldn't get control of the newspapers, so the political opposition had these magazines.

DONNELLY: That's true, but in the early days when I was there, there were no opposition magazines. The first one of any stature was Mei Li Tao. That was squashed. Then there were people like Antonio Chang who had started magazines with K'ang Ning-hsiang that tested the waters, pushing the envelope until today it's wide open.

Q: You know Antonio fairly well. What did his career look like? What did you understand of his experiences?

DONNELLY: Well he started working with K'ang Ning-hsiang. He's sort of a very balanced guy, I think, but very Taiwanese. His wife is a mainlander, I believe, so he's not wild. His background is totally newspaper and press, and then of course he had his own newspaper and now he has a government job. He now has the equivalent in the Taiwan government of Condoleezza Rice (National Security Adviser). I don't know the Chinese term, but he's the deputy national security adviser.

Q: Antonio Chang?

DONNELLY: Antonio Chang, yes.

Q: Because I knew him?

DONNELLY: He laughs over all the trouble he had. I asked him if he'd been in China and he said, "Yes," and I guess during Tiananmen he was there and I think he was arrested. He laughed and he said, "Oh, their jails are not nearly as efficient as our jails."

He was here recently.

Q: Oh, was he?

DONNELLY: But he is now in government.

Q: Well, now there's an interesting symbol of the changes that Taiwan has undergone politically, because in the '80s when I knew Chang and K'ang Ning-hsiang, they were on the outside; they were sweating every issue they put out, they were very aware of where the rules were and how close they could get to the envelope.

DONNELLY: Taiwan is blessed with a lot of very, very intelligent opposition people; they're not wild radicals.

One of the things USIS does really well is libraries. We had within USIA in Washington a bunch of officers who wanted to do away with libraries; make them media centers and just let certain people at it. You know, get rid of a lot of books. But libraries are magnets and they draw the intellectuals. K'ang Ning-hsiang would come to the USIS library often and what he'd do, he would go and read the Congressional Record because we had copies of the congressional record. Anything that was ever said about Taiwan in Congress, he knew. He did his homework well. A lot of people would come to the library and get all this sort of information and so they were really one step ahead of the government on a lot of the issues.

Q: Just through the simple availability of a USIA library?

DONNELLY: Now maybe, I guess all of this is on the Internet so maybe it doesn't make any difference anymore. I don't know, but in those days it did.

I attended a cultural conference in Penang one time. John Reinhardt was the head of USIA and cultural officers from the USIS cultural offices from all over Asia came. We had a session on libraries and some people got up and argued that really libraries were expensive and took up room, and we ought to do away with them because we could do things better without them. I got up and challenged that because I think the libraries are the best thing we do and I made the point which I think is valid, that if we had a USIS library in Changsha, China in 1920, Mao Zedong would've been in that library every day. I'm sure of that. I think just the availability, it's a magnet, it's passive, but like a magnet it draws.

Q: I think you've put your finger on an important point. The Americans are can-do; get out there and whatnot, and the library is passive. It doesn't solve the American psychological need for action.

DONNELLY: Freedom now.

Q: Freedom now, right.

DONNELLY: We had one guy named Carter, Allen Carter, who had some position that he was able to get his feelings known, and his idea was that each USIS officer should know twenty-five people and these twenty-five people we should cultivate and we should decide what books they should read and, whether they ask for it or not, send them the book anyway. This is nonsense stuff, but it's so nonsensical that it was current for a lot of USIS. Maybe that's why there is no longer a USIS, I don't know. (laughs) In any embassy, as you well know, the people who knew the situation best, the people who knew the most local people, were political officers and USIS officers.

Q: Yes, definitely.

DONNELLY: That was because, I think, the U.S. officers had the freedom to move around and had the mandate to know something about the culture.

Q: And they also had the language. I mean, we had the language and that simply frees you up and you can move around in whatever environment you're in.

Is there anything else we need to touch bases on about Taiwan?

DONNELLY: I haven't talked this much in ten years. (laughs)

Q: After Taiwan, you go back to VOA.

DONNELLY: Yes.

Q: Do you have a ping-pong career here; VOATaiwan?

DONNELLY: I did, and again it's all happenstance.

When I left Taiwan, I was assigned as a deputy examiner at the Board of Examiners. I was there for about three months. I didn't like it at all. James Conkling was the head of VOA appointed by Reagan. He came over to see me and asked if I would become division chief of the East Asian Pacific Division. I said, "Oh, sure, I guess so." Now Conkling was a very nice guy; he, like all these people in the Reagan and Nixon years, was conservative, but a really decent guy that wasn't wild. He had made his money in the record industry, I guess. He was married to one of the King sisters, and I believe the King sisters were a singing trio, but because I'm not much on modern music, I don't know, but I'm told they were sort of good, I guess. He was a buddy of Reagan. Reagan appointed buddies from Hollywood.

The director of USIS was a guy by the name of Charles Wick. Charles Wick's wife and Reagan's wife carpooled their children to day school or whatever it was, and they were buddies in that day. He was appointed head of USIA on the basis of his Hollywood career, which the crowning glory of it was that he directed the movie Snow White and the Three Stooges. Years later I thought it incumbent upon me to see what this was and I must say it's a well forgotten movie.

In any event, Conkling was there at VOA for just a couple of months after I was there and had had it. He could not take the bureaucracy and he quit. Then we got a real young cowboy; a guy by the name of Tomlinson who was an editor of Reader's Digest. He had the right political connections. He was a real conservative. I objected to a lot of the things they did. They had a policy of writing editorials; we used to have several commentaries and the service chief could pick what commentaries he thought would fit in his language. They directed there would be an editorial every day that every service must take and must not change a word.

Q: "Every service" would be the Chinese, the Korean?

DONNELLY: Russian, everybody.

Q: So VOA is putting out in languages and not being able to select something that might be relevant to your audience because you know it's winter out there and they want to talk about, and now you are ordered to take?

DONNELLY: It has to be broadcast and you can't change a word. I didn't make myself popular by telling Tomlinson this just didn't make any sense because we're on the 365 days a year. I don't think the U.S. government has 365 policy statements that they want to make in a year and I don't think they're all relevant to the same country. I mean, Nicaragua is more relative to Latin America than to Uzbekistan. I also made the point that you don't argue the same way in every culture. The Chinese have a certain way of getting points across and other people do it by more indirection. You've got to give your translators the freedom to change that so the argument becomes persuasive and not static.

Q: Basically the counter argument is, "I don't care about the other culture and how it performs. I'm only interested in my presentation." So he's not really interested in affecting this.

DONNELLY: They seemed, the neo-conservatives, seemed to admire Chinese and Russian communist propaganda. They think it works, but it never did. That was the point. But they wanted to be as hard hitting as the Russian propaganda. Nobody ever believes one side of the story if there is only one side. I told him once I thought we were the voice of America, not the anti-communist voice in America. That didn't sit well with him.

Q: Now as director of the East Asia Division there are other regional divisions; there's a Middle East Division and whatnot. So you're a high ranking VOA administrator at this time, not only determining the content of the programming, but are you interested in resources and towers and the transmission side?

DONNELLY: Not resources, no. Just hiring, making sure we have the right people. The content, there were a hundred sixty people in my division, that's a lot of personnel problems to deal with.

Q: One hundred sixty people and thirteen languages?

DONNELLY: Well, we had about eight languages and needed to make sure that things go well. The Chinese branch alone had about sixty; that meant that there were at least thirty personal arguments going on at any one time.

Q: And then you're getting this political direction in the early years. Now one of the things that must've been interesting is we have recognized China, we have recognized Beijing, whereas before we were supposed to be putting on all this anti-communist stuff. How has VOA adjusted to the normalization of relations with China?

DONNELLY: When I got to the China branch in '72, there were two types of Chinese. There were the Chinese that came from the mainland; they were the older ones. Then there were the Chinese who had grown up in Taiwan; the younger ones. So there's a generation difference. The Chinese that had grown up in Taiwan were sons and daughters of mainland people. They may have been born in China, but got their education in Taiwan. The older Chinese had their education in China; and accordingly felt a little superior and criticized the language of the younger ones. Then when we recognized China, the older ones pretty much had been gone and we got a new bunch of Chinese who were younger Chinese who had been educated in China obviously, and the older Chinese were now the ones educated in Taiwan. So there was a little bit of friction.

Q: In case you're wanting to continue your hiring to make sure you get all the colloquialisms, all the latest jokes.

DONNELLY: Well, we had to make sure that we didn't use Taiwan nomenclature; for example, the word for computer in Taiwan is different from that used in China. So we had to make sure we had the right word. Even the words "Kissinger" and "Kennedy" had different Chinese characters and different pronunciation. We wanted to make sure we had it right, so that was a big problem. Now, of course, with somebody from the mainland, it isn't a big deal.

Q: Where would the new mainland people be hired from? Would these be students here in the States already?

DONNELLY: Yes. One of the problems is that anybody that is hired has to have a background investigation, so that's a difficult thing to do. I don't know how they finally determine whether somebody is a security risk or not. There may be a bit of Kentucky windage. I don't know. I believe a lot of them are hired here, but we don't hire anybody that doesn't have some radio background or certainly a good radio voice and has a good command of the language. So a lot of the ones we hired from Taiwan worked in Taiwan radio or Taiwan television. I don't know about the ones from the mainland because they hired them after I had left the China Branch and returned to Taiwan.

While I was there later as the division chief, we did have several, two or three, that we hired from the mainland, and I honestly forget what their background was. One thing, about ten years after I retired, I kept getting calls from USIA. There was a class action suit against VOA by women; they said they were discriminated against being hired. I had a hundred and sixty people and they would call me up and say: What about (and then they'd give me a name, an Indonesian announcer)? I'd say, I couldn't remember, but I can tell them that the checking of somebody's credentials would be done by the service chief. But I said I believe the suit doesn't have any merit.

They won the suit, obviously, but it doesn't have any merit because in broadcasting you want the female voice; the female voice is higher and penetrates jamming and interference. It's a better voice for international broadcasting rather than a male voice which is lower. So we always looked for female voices and I think in the China branch at least half or more of our broadcasters were women.

Q: Isn't that interesting; the technical aspect?

Now you were talking about getting orders from the new Reagan Administration. There's always the stereotype, if not the real controversy, about VOA's independence. State complains from time to time about some VOA editorial. Were those kinds of issues things that occurred on your watch?

DONNELLY: Yes, it did, but I don't think State would complain about the editorials; they would complain about the commentaries. We still had commentaries, which is like the OpEd page of the newspaper. But they wouldn't complain about the editorials because every editorial was cleared at the White House before it was put on the air.

Q: You're kidding.

DONNELLY: I'm not kidding. Whether it is today or not, I don't know. But in my day every one was cleared at the White House in the Reagan days. So they would not be complaining about those. They might have complained about them, but not to us; to themselves maybe. But the way we operated, and I may have said this before, we would not put anything on the air unless it was double sourced.

Q: Right, in terms of your reporting.

DONNELLY: The VOA correspondents guarded their independence jealously. I think I mentioned this before. Overseas they wouldn't even contact the embassy officer which put them really behind the curve because everybody else was doing it. State would complain now and then, but it wouldn't have any affect.

Q: No, VOA is doing two or three things. It has its own journalists out there, it's own newsgathering group as any news organization does, and then it's got these commentaries that you're talking about which is sort of the OpEd thing and that's an editor back here in Washington or one of the staffers back in Washington. So there's two different sort of things. So on one hand, you're really quite the publisher.

DONNELLY: The main source is commercial news services like the UPI, NBC (National Broadcasting Company), any of that, and all that information... We had a newsroom and in the newsroom all information would come in on ticker in the old days. I don't know if it comes in now with computer. But they would come in on ticker and you would tear it off and it would be AP covering an earthquake in Japan or something and then Reuters would have the same story, pretty familiar, and our news room would take the news from wherever it comes, Washington or Tokyo, and rewrite the story and send it on a wire from the newsroom to each one of the services. So the services then would have a news item that they could then translate. They could pick and choose and those news items would've already been cleared by the newsroom downstairs and the newsroom would make sure it's double sourced and it's accurate because we'd rather be a little slow with the news than put out something that wasn't accurate. On the ticker there would be OpEd-type commentaries. There would also be feature stories - a visit to an Amish farm or something like that.

Q: Now you're the division chief from August '81 to February '85, I think it is. Now that covers the period of the August '82 communiquï¿½ with Beijing. Do you recall anything special out of that?

DONNELLY: No, only that it was reported straight. As division chief I would have no input in whether we should or shouldn't do that; we put that out straight. We put out the communiquï¿½.

Q: So anything about VOA and its responsibilities at this time that we need to touch bases?

DONNELLY: I don't think so.

Q: So did you retire then in '85?

DONNELLY: Yes, about two months before I retired, I left VOA and did a little bit of work on the World's Fair in Vancouver.

Q: Oh, goodness.

DONNELLY: But, there wasn't much. I just took a couple trips there and wrote a couple reports, but nothing of any consequence.

Q: Now you mentioned earlier that you went to the Philippines?

DONNELLY: That's after I retired.

Q: What have you done then since retirement?

DONNELLY: Well, I worked for a couple years at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, which is different than the Rockefeller Foundation. They set up a foundation in the Philippines to honor President Magsaysay, who died in a plane crash. Everybody thought he was a pretty decent guy and they wanted to do something to honor him so they set up this fund.

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund set up this Magsaysay Fund a little bit like the Nobel Foundation; they give out awards every year to people who are outstanding in community work and government work and in other areas.

All I did was write the biographies.

Q: How did this come to your attention?

DONNELLY: Somebody recommended me after I retired and it was nice for a couple of years.

Q: So you did that for a couple years?

DONNELLY: And then retired.

Q: And then retired.

Well, we've covered a lot of territory here and I think the question I want to ask is, what do you think you really got out of USIA? If you had an audience and you were going to say USIA is important, where would you put your finger?

DONNELLY: There are two questions; what did I get out of it and why is it important?

Recently someone wrote an article; I think it was Richard Holbrooke, who I never thought was a supporter of USIA. At the beginning of the Afghan, the anti-Taliban war, if you want to call it that, it looked as if the Muslim world were rising up against us. He said the problem is that we don't have any public diplomacy and not since we jettisoned USIA. And I thought, 'ha, ha, ha, is that funny.'

The value of USIA is just making people aware. I've always thought if people understand us then there would be fewer problems, but I don't know now if CNN and the world net and all this, if USIA could not have continued in the way that I knew it. When I went into USIA, as I mentioned before, mobile trucks were going out in the jungles and showing films. You can't do that anymore. There's no need to do that.

Public diplomacy still is very important and public diplomacy has to be more than a State Department spokesman or the White House spokesman, or speeches. There has to be a personal component and that's what USIA was good at, the personal component; knowing people in the academic world and the cultural world and in the government world in individual countries. In the embassies now, I don't think that can be done for these reasons; one, there may be too much work to do, and two, I don't know that they're getting the right people although I'm not sure, and three, the embassies are becoming fortresses. Maybe the Peace Corps can do this sort of public diplomacy where you go out not with an official message like a daily editorial, but just with a great deal of knowledge about your government, about your government's policies, and the country you're living in, and melding them together.

Q: But isn't that the key thing? I mean, every time you've mentioned a program here, you talked about understanding the environment you're in and then what speaker or what program might be appropriate to that environment. But that means you have to be a language officer, you have to be there, you have had to talk to the local press, you have to know the local issues that they're struggling with so that you pick the speaker on pollution, rather than the speaker on chicken farming.

DONNELLY: That's right. I mean, you've said it better than I could. That's exactly the problem. You read now about Afghanistan and people say, "Where are all our Afghan speakers?" Well of course we don't have any Afghan speakers, or not many, but sure you've got to know the language. Even more than knowing the language, and usually when you learn the language, you get the culture.

Q: Right, it's hard-wired to the language.

DONNELLY: And if you're any good at all, you're going to read about the history of the place. That's what you need and I don't think embassies can do it, for a lot of reasons. The message and the information about America, probably CNN is going to do it as well as we can do it, but you can't get the personal involvement.

And your question, what did I get out of it? Oh, I got a good life. I enjoyed every day. When I was in Taiwan... People are very surprised when they find that I was there eleven years. It was a fluke. How did it happen? I don't know how it happened, but because I was there so long, I could get deep into the culture and it felt sort of almost like home, which is one of the marks against guys like me; they go native, you know. Well, I never wore a long gown or stroked my beard, but I got a great deal out of it, an appreciation for Chinese. I have a family with four children and they all have very fond memories.

Q: You were mentioning in a break that you still keep up with some of the people.

DONNELLY: Oh, yes, I have several Taiwanese friends here, in America, but when people like Antonio Chang or Lu Hsiao-lien (Annette Lu), who is now the vice president, when she would come to America she would call me. Now that she is vice president, she probably won't get here, and if she got here she wouldn't have any time anyway. Of course then there are all the people that worked in the USIS Taipei and Taichung and Tainan offices, a lot of them are living here now, immigrated, and I keep in touch with some of them.

Q: Well, that's great. Neal, I appreciate it. Thank you very much for taking this time and sharing these experiences. I hope it's worthwhile to the listener because you often don't get the understanding of things in Taiwan. Taiwan is always discussed with this higher anti-communist plane sort of thing.

Thank you very much.

AIT Fight Song: composed by three AIT staff members and their wives and sung to "the Mickey Mouse Parade."

USIS ReleaseMay 12, 1961

Speech given by Vice President Johnson at Independence Palace in Saigon at a Farewell Dinner given in his honor by President Ngo Dinh Diem.

My President, and my friends, I envy you. Mr. President, I'm really very ashamed that I cannot say to you what is in my heart in your language as you have said to me what is in your heart so well. You have been very gracious and generous with me, and I am grateful and my countrymen will long remember the hospitality of you people and your country. We live in a very difficult period in history when the best that is in any man is challenged. And as I said in your presence today of more than three hours, I left with both inspiration and stimulation. I recognize, as you recognize, and all here know, that there is an evil force loose in the world. Its purpose is to get what we've got if it can. Another way to put it, as we would in my native hill country, is the fox is loose, Mr. President, he's after the chickens and you live in the chicken house. So we recognize the danger. If a bully is loose in the world, and can come in and run you off your lawn today, he'll be back tomorrow to drive you from your porch.

President Kennedy has an intense interest in this part of the world. He is a determined and dedicated man. He is dedicated to the principles of freedom which brought our nation into existence. He is determined that no single individual anywhere in the world will be brought into the communist orbit and be shackled and put into the straightjacket if he can help avoid it. He will be pleased to note what your ideas are because he is of the opinion that too often my countrymen have been too free with their own opinions and not anxious enough to receive the opinions of their brother and neighbor.

I came here to listen and to learn, and I'm fearful I'm talking too much, but I have listened and I've learned, and I know my President will be pleased with your ideas, your suggestions and your convictions. And I think he will do something about it, because frankly, Mr. President, these are dangerous times for you and for us, and we are all in this thing together.

This morning on behalf of my President I presented you some books that give the history of our country. This afternoon as I went among your people on your farms and the villages, in the street corners, I talked about you and your work. And I heard from the little and the large, and it seemed to me that you are the man that the times call for. When America was born, it was the vision of George Washington, the first President of our country, that led us to independence and that preserved us as a nation when apparently everything was going wrong. It was division in Washington that brought us into existence, but it was the courage of Andrew Jackson that let every world power know that the United States of America meant what it said. It was the wisdom of Woodrow Wilson and the astuteness of Franklin Roosevelt that stopped the dictators in their tracks after the Lusitania had been sunk, after they'd marched through the low countries, after we'd lost many battles both in Asia and in Europe, and the sky was dark. Nevertheless, the wisdom of men like Wilson and Roosevelt preserved our freedom.

And I hope you will not think me complimentary but I see in you the qualities of the father of our country, because in reality you are the father of your country. I see in you the courage and the stamina of Jackson standing up and saying, "Don't cross this line." I see in your comments this morning the wisdom and the scholarliness of Wilson and the astuteness of Roosevelt - although he never could get 89% of the votes. But you embody the fine characteristics of all these men that make up the history that I give. And my President is going to be proud to know that we have a partner and a brother like you and your people, the little children, the grown-ups, the old men and the women. As I said today at lunch, and I want to repeat, we say that you can look into a man's eyes and see what's inside. And I looked into the eyes of the Vietnamese, and I think I know what's in their hearts. They are a liberty loving people who treasure their freedom and had the vision to get it and the courage to keep it. Will you join me in a toast to one of the great men of our times - the President of Vietnam.

End of interview